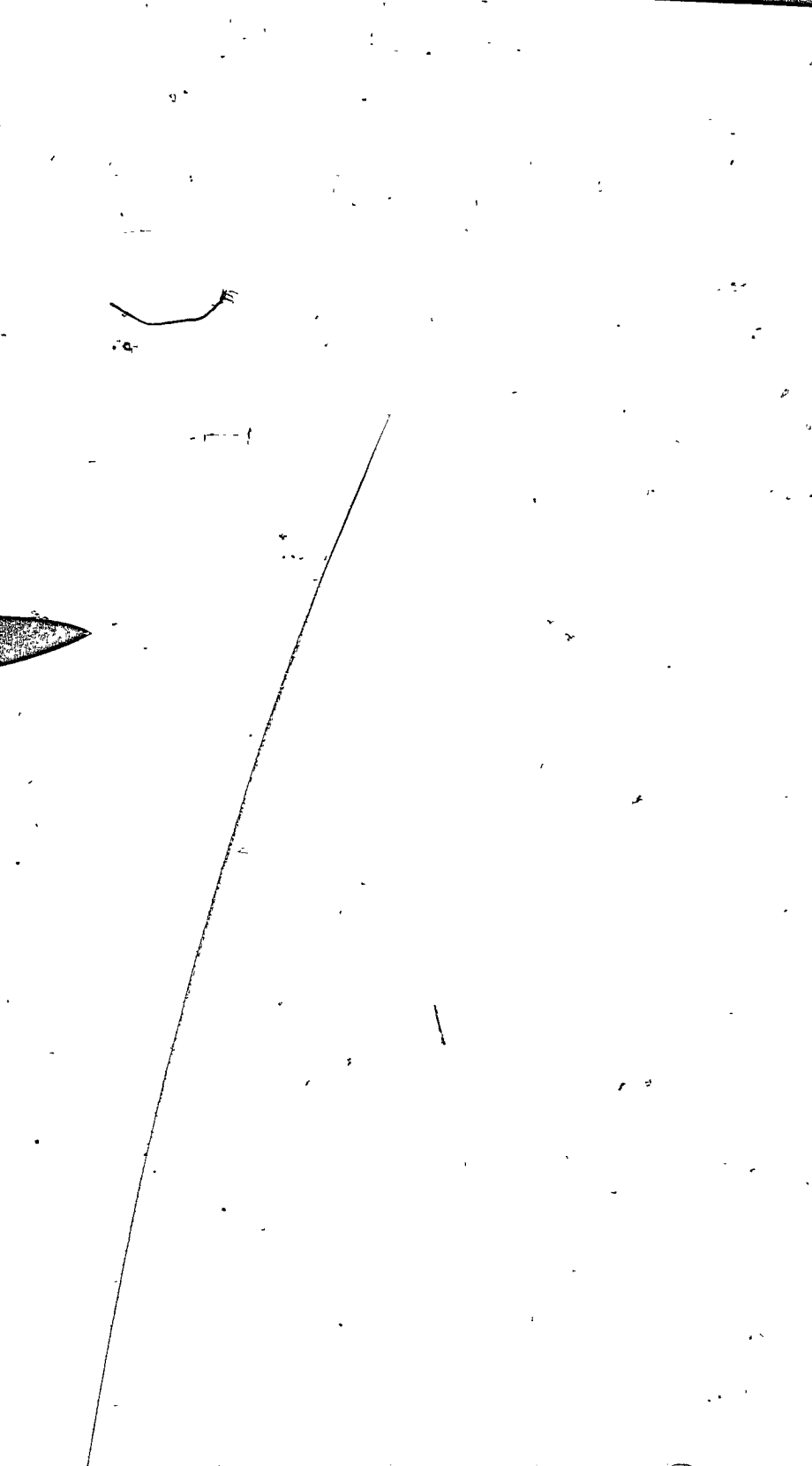


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IN THE SHADOW OF THE ROCKIES







IN THE  
SHADOW OF THE ROCKIES

BY  
C. M. MACINNES, M.A.

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RIVINGTONS  
34 KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN  
LONDON

1930



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## PREFACE

THIS book has been written at the request of the Old Timers' Association of Southern Alberta, a body which includes most of the surviving pioneers of that district. Having collected reminiscences from as many of its members as could be induced to write, the Association entrusted me with the task of producing the book. As these documents were for the most part personal stories, which dealt with particular aspects of pioneer life in the west, it seemed impossible to arrange them in such a way as to present a complete view of the subject, just as it is difficult to base an accurate description of the course of a battle upon the impressions of a number of individual soldiers. On the whole, therefore, it seemed advisable to draw upon all available material in the preparation of the book, and to use the Old Timers' reminiscences wherever possible.

The Bristol Colston Research Society by its generous grants has facilitated my investigations. I gratefully acknowledge the help I have received from the officials of the Canadian Archives at Ottawa, Mr. J. A. Jaffray, Provincial Librarian at Edmonton, the Honourable J. H. King, Canadian Minister of Health, Commissioner Starnes of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Honourable J. H. Greenfield, Agent-General for Alberta, and Mr. C. C. Coleman, President of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Western Section. Mr. G. Home of Winchester very kindly read my manuscript through for me and made many valuable suggestions, for which I wish to thank him. I am indebted to

my colleague Mr. W. W. Jervis, Reader in Geography in the University of Bristol, and to his pupil, Mr. J. S. Stephens, who prepared the maps for me. I am particularly grateful to Mr. Harold Riley, Secretary of the Old Timers' Association, for the great consideration he has shown me, and for the readiness with which he has always responded to my innumerable queries, letters and cables. Lastly, I wish to thank my friend Mr. F. C. Jones, Miss P. M. Ridd and my Wife, without whose help this book could not have been written.

C. M. MACINNES

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL,

*April 1930.*

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*at the end of the book*

### I. AND II. SOUTHERN ALBERTA

## CHAPTER I

### THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

"THE Great Lone Land is no sensational name. The North-West fulfils at the present time every essential of that title. There is no other habitable part of the globe where loneliness can be said to live more thoroughly. One may wander five hundred miles in a direct line without seeing a human being or an animal larger than a wolf. And if vastness of plain and magnitude of lakes, mountain and river can mark a land as great, then no region possesses a higher claim to that distinction."<sup>1</sup> So wrote Captain. Butler in 1872 after his memorable visit to the Canadian North-West, and of all the vast regions he referred to, there was no part more lonely or remote than what is now known as Southern Alberta.

In spite of the honour done to the country by being named after a royal princess, it is difficult not to feel that some more suitable appellation could have been discovered. There are many picturesque Indian names which would all have been more appropriate, but Alberta the country was called by Lord Lorne and Alberta it must remain. This book is concerned only with that portion of the present province which stretches from the Red Deer River to the forty-ninth parallel, and more particularly, the country south of the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Southern Alberta is a high plateau which slopes upwards from an altitude of 2,181 feet at Medicine Hat to 4,534 feet at Banff. It is a land

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *The Great Lone Land*, Preface.

of open prairie and rolling hills, which increase in size as the traveller proceeds westward to the Rocky Mountains. With the exception of the Milk River district in the south, which is part of the Missouri system, the whole country is drained by the South Saskatchewan and its many tributaries. As a rule the rivers run in deep valleys, far below the open prairie. Early explorers were one and all impressed with the beauty of the Bow River district and the foothill region generally. One writer spoke of it as the future garden of Canada, magnificent in scenery, rich in soil, and enjoying a climate having a winter temperature fifteen degrees higher than the western parts of the Province of Ontario. Grant, in speaking of the whole North-West, says "It is a fair land, rich in furs and fish, in treasures of the forest, the field and the mine; seamed by navigable rivers, interlaced by numerous creeks and beautiful with a thousand lakes; broken by swelling uplands, wooded hillsides and bold ridges. The air is pure, dry and bracing all the year round; giving promise of health and strength of body and length of days."<sup>1</sup>

With the exception of the foothill region, the climate of Southern Alberta is dry. In the zone technically described as arid, that is the district in the vicinity of Medicine Hat, the average annual rainfall is about 13 inches. In the semi-dry belt which includes the rest of Southern Alberta except the foothill area, the average is about 15.75 inches, while Pincher Creek reaches about 17.85. When it is remembered that the average rainfall for the whole of Great Britain is about 40 inches, the comparative dryness of Southern Alberta will be realised. Considerable variations in precipitation, however, occur from time to time, particularly in the semi-dry and dry zones. Although the average for Calgary is about 17 inches, it has been as low as 7.9 inches and as high as 34.1.

<sup>1</sup> Grant, *Ocean to Ocean*, pp. 204-5.



The length of the frost-free period varies from a hundred and twenty-two days at Medicine Hat and a hundred and two at Lethbridge and Macleod, to eighty-seven at Calgary. During this period the mean temperatures of these places are: Medicine Hat 65·6 degrees, Lethbridge 62·8, Macleod 61·4 and Calgary 58·4, which makes Southern Alberta slightly warmer than Great Britain, whose mean July temperature is about 60. A mean summer temperature of 57·5 degrees, provided that it continues for two months, is sufficient for plant growth. But while the average summer temperature of Southern Alberta is slightly higher than that of Great Britain, its average winter temperature of 17 degrees from December to March contrasted with 40 degrees, the mean January temperature of Great Britain, is definitely lower.

A feature of Southern Alberta as characteristic as its clear, bright weather and rolling prairie, is its winds. The Chinooks are warm, dry west winds, which occur both in summer and winter. The summer Chinooks frequently result in excessive evaporation and soil drifting, particularly in the south-east, and it is this fact that has made that part of the prairie less well adapted for crop production than the west and north. Winter Chinooks frequently lead to a rise in temperature of 60 degrees in the course of a few hours, and it was the existence of this phenomenon which in former days made the Bow River district a favourite haunt of the bison, and in later times the seat of a flourishing ranching industry. Thanks to this wind the winters are rarely severe, the ground is seldom covered by more than a few inches of snow and sometimes scarcely at all. The Chinook resembles the Swiss föhn and results from the same cause. "Under the prevailing pressure distribution the air of the Chinook is forced to descend rapidly from the mountain tops to the lowlands. In doing so it is warmed dynamically and its capacity for water vapour increased so that it becomes rela-

tively dryer. Free air observations have shown that the temperature aloft is even higher than that at the surface. When the air of the Chinook has first ascended the western slopes of the mountains before descending on the leeward side, an additional source of warming is available through the liberation of latent heat in the process of the condensation of water vapour into rain or snow on the windward slopes."<sup>1</sup> In velocity it varies from a gentle breeze to a gale ; it may come in short gusts or blow steadily for several hours. It may last for three or four days, and while it is on, the weather in comparison with the preceding cold weather seems like summer. In an incredibly short time the plains covered in deep snow become perfectly bare and the roads dry and hard. "The Chinook is an ever-welcome guest whose coming is indicative of good, and whose absence would be a momentous evil."<sup>2</sup>

The soil of the country is mainly sandy in the south-east and a deep rich loam in the foothill area. Owing to the comparatively light rainfall, the characteristic natural growth is short grass. It has been estimated that upwards of forty-six of the ninety-six varieties that are to be found on this part of the prairie make excellent hay. These short prairie grasses are not only nutritious, but, owing to the nature of the climate, cure as they stand in the sun and dry winds of the autumn, so that in the winter, under a very thin blanket of snow, the country is one vast hayfield. It was this fact, together with the abundant shelter to be found in the innumerable coulees and river bottoms and the plentiful supply of good fresh water in all seasons, that made it a ranchers' paradise.

Originally the country was well stocked with game. While the bison was the typical animal, elk, moose, deer and beaver

<sup>1</sup> Ward, *The Climates of the United States*, p. 415.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 416.

were also to be found, not to mention ubiquitous wolves, coyotes and gophers. As late as 1875, when the police came in sight of the place where Calgary now stands, they saw a beaver dam in full working order. Wild geese and ducks also abound in large numbers, as well as prairie chicken and other wild fowl, and a certain amount of fish is to be found in the various streams.

It has been estimated that Alberta contains about 15 per cent of the coal deposits of the world, or 87 per cent of those in Canada. The southern half of the province is underlain by one or more coal formations, varying in quality from not particularly good lignite out on the plains, to good anthracite on the eastern slopes of the Rockies. Small quantities of gold have also been found from time to time, but very little iron. Natural gas occurs in considerable quantities, particularly in the south-east where it is dry, and has been used for heating and lighting.

When first visited by white men, Southern Alberta was the country of the great Blackfoot confederation, reputed to be the most powerful Indian group on the Canadian plains, and the fiercest warriors on the continent. "At war with their hereditary enemies the Crees, upon their northern and eastern boundaries, at war with Kootenais and Flathead tribes on south and west, at war with Assiniboines on the south-east and north-west, carrying on predatory expeditions against the Americans on the Missouri, this Blackfoot nation forms a people of whom it may truly be said that they are against every man and every man is against them."<sup>1</sup> Like the white men, the Blackfeet were themselves immigrants, as they were the advance guard of the Algonquin movement west from the Red River. At its greatest extent their territory embraced the huge area stretching from the North Saskatchewan to the southern headwaters of the

<sup>1</sup> Butler's Report, quoted in Butler, *The Great Lone Land*, p. 376.

Missouri, and from the Rocky Mountains on the west to the 105th longitude on the east. They were commonly known as the Siksika from the *Sik Sinam*, "black", and *ka*, the root, *ogkatsk*, "foot". According to some authorities this referred to the discolouring of their moccasins by prairie fires,<sup>1</sup> while others believe that the name denoted the black painted moccasins worn by them in common with the Pawnees, Sihasapa and other tribes. The Blackfoot confederation was composed of the Blackfeet proper, who appear to have been the original nucleus, the Bloods and the Piegan, and they were in alliance with the Sarsi, and generally on friendly terms with the Wood Assiniboines or the Stonies who lived in the mountains along the headwaters of the Saskatchewan. They had no fixed abode, but followed the buffalo about from place to place, and, according to the *Handbook of the Indians of Canada*, they had no pottery, but Cocking definitely states that they had. Except for a certain species of tobacco which they sowed and gathered, and camas root which they gathered in the foothills, they had no agriculture.

When Hendry visited them in 1754, he found them already in possession of the horse. Thompson, some thirty years later, gathered from conversations he held with the old chief Saukhamapee, that the Piegan first obtained this animal during the second or third decade of the eighteenth century from their traditional enemies the Snakes, who lived on the other side of the mountains.

The Blackfeet, Bloods and Piegan each had their elective chiefs, their separate dances and councils. Each tribe was divided up into a number of bands, and there were among them, in addition, various military and fraternal organisations, "Iqunuhkahsti or All Comrades", as among other plains tribes. There were also many secret societies to which

<sup>1</sup> *Handbook of the Indians of Canada*, pp. 426-7.

women as well as men might belong. In addition to the Sun Dance there were other dances of a social, military or religious nature. They had their sacred "bundles" round which centred some ritual, and each adult had also his own personal "medicine".

The Sarsi,<sup>1</sup> from *Su arsi*, "not good", belonged to the eastern Athabaskan family. In the remote past they had wandered south to the plains country and in the course of years, while still retaining their distinctive language, acquired some of the characteristics of the prairie Indians and entered into a loose alliance with the Blackfoot confederacy. According to one tradition a quarrel broke out among the members of the original tribe, one part of it coming south and these were the Sarsi. The explanation which they themselves gave was that on a certain occasion, when the tribe was crossing a lake, a boy seized a horn protruding through the ice and when the horn was struck the ice broke. Those who had not yet arrived on the spot remained in the north, those who had already crossed became the Sarsi, while those engulfed in the lake were turned into mythical water beings. The general view seems to be that the Sarsi were not so fine a race as the Blackfeet, less communicative and less intelligent.

Like their allies the Blackfeet, the Sarsi were polygamous, and each brave was allowed to have from two to five wives, or more if required. So long as he returned the presents or their equivalents to the original donors, together with his wives, he could divorce them at pleasure. Girls were often betrothed at ten years of age and married at fourteen, and after betrothal they were never supposed to look a man in the face before marriage. Apparently the very much over-worked mother-in-law myth was understood among them,

<sup>1</sup> "Sarsi" is the spelling adopted in the *Handbook of the Indians of Canada*. Other alternative spellings are "Sarcee", or "Sarcees".

for a law required that a man must never meet his mother-in-law and if, by chance, he happened to touch her, which seems rather a weak word for the idea implied, he must at once give her a present. Their physicians were mostly women, whose methods were similar to those of the other tribes. When called in they heated a stone in the fire, and having touched it with one of their fingers, placed that particular finger on the patient's body. Having discovered the seat of the ailment, the doctor then proceeded to suck the afflicted part and to spit the disease out on the ground. All this was accompanied by much drum beating and shaking of rattles.

The Sarsi also made use of the vapour bath. This consisted of a small hut made of bent green saplings covered with buffalo skins, or in later times, blankets. Inside were red-hot stones, over which the patient poured cold water, which was passed into him by his friends. Sometimes in the dead of winter, when thoroughly heated, the bather would rush out and plunge into a near-by stream often with fatal results.

These Indians were fortunate in the first two white men who came among them to describe them and their manner of life. Anthony Hendry was a man whose dangerous life and bold spirit enabled him to appreciate the sterling qualities of these savages. David Thompson, in many ways the greatest of all the explorers of the Far West, and certainly the most attractive of all of them in character, was a very different type. He devotes two chapters in his Journals to these Indians, and as he was among the first to see them totally uninfluenced by the white man and was, moreover, himself a person of broad sympathies and deep insight, his account, though it may not be all that the professional anthropologist might require, remains for the layman about the best description of them that has ever been given.

Indian warfare was apparently not nearly so deadly before the white man arrived as it became when the natives were armed with guns. A typical warrior's equipment consisted of a bow of larch which reached to the chin, a quiver of fifty arrows and a lance tipped with iron or stone. The brave also carried an axe and, if he had one, a knife. The two opposing forces squatted down behind their shields and spent the day in trying to pick off their enemies. "On both sides several were wounded, but none lay on the ground; and night put an end to the battle, without a scalp being taken on either side, and in those days such was the result, unless one party was more numerous than the other."<sup>1</sup>

The war chief frequently showed considerable military talent and knowledge of tactics, and the battle was conducted according to a well thought-out plan which he modified as the exigencies of the combat demanded. Thus for example, when Thompson's friend who had guns, assisted the Piegan, the war chief, having first terrified their enemies the Snakes by a volley from the ten guns of his allies, proceeded to distribute them up and down the line, so as to make the enemy believe that his whole force was equally well armed.

At the time of this battle, about 1730, the Blackfeet were very much in fear of the Snakes, because the latter were mounted and could ride down the Piegan. It was shortly after this that they first obtained horses from the Snake Indians and not, as was formerly believed, from the Indians to the south of them. "We were anxious to see a horse of which we had heard so much. At last, as the leaves were falling, we heard that one was killed by an arrow shot into his belly, but the Snake Indian that rode him got away; numbers of us went to see him, and we all admired him; he

<sup>1</sup> Thompson's *Narrative*, ed. Tyrrell, p: 329.

put us in mind of a Stag that had lost his horns, and we did not know what name to give him. But as he was a slave to man, like the dog, which carried out things, he was named the Big Dog."<sup>1</sup>

The Piegan, who were a frontier people, led an even more precarious life than the other tribes. From boyhood they were taught the use of arms and to be good warriors. Although they had no hard work to do, their life of hardship and danger rendered them more moral than other peoples, and many of them, according to Thompson, had a chivalrous bearing ready for any enterprise. Their political organisation was simple and effective. Government was in the hands of their civil chief and the elders. While the chieftainship was usually elective, the civil chiefs, like the kings of Wessex, were apparently drawn mainly from one family. The insignia of office were "the backs of two fine Otter skins covered with mother of pearl, which from behind his neck hung down his breast to below the belt".<sup>2</sup> This chief presided at all councils except those of war and, by means of scouts, kept himself informed about the movement of the buffalo. The news thus collected he distributed to the camp after sunset, by walking about among the tents to proclaim it in a loud voice, with such comments as he thought necessary. The civil chief of the Piegan, at the time of Thompson's visit, was very fluent and much admired for his eloquence but not for his principles, as his advice was not always wise, often being too violent and more likely to produce quarrels than to allay them.

The conduct of all military affairs was entirely in the hands of the war chief, who in Thompson's time was Kootenae Appe (Kootenay Man), a huge warrior standing 6 feet 6 inches in height. This man's word was sacred and he was universally respected and loved by the tribe. He always

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 334.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 346.



camped at least one day's journey nearer to the Snakes than any other. Among the Piegan, as among more developed races, the relations between the civil and military authorities were not always harmonious. Kootenae Appe "looked on the civil Chief with indifference as a garrulous old man, more fit for talking than anything else, and they rarely camped together". "The Peegans", wrote Thompson, "are a fine race of men, tall and muscular, with manly features and intelligent countenances, the eye large, black and piercing, the nose full and generally straight, the teeth regular and white, the hair long, straight and black".<sup>1</sup> Thompson believed that the stoicism of the Indians was more apparent than real. They were trained to act in public, particularly in the presence of their enemies, as if nothing affected them, but in private he found them much the same as other men. Many of the young men were great dandies, and sometimes it took as much as an hour to paint their faces "with white, red, green, blue and yellow, or part of these colours, with their looking-glasses and advising one another how to lay on the different colours in stripes, circles, dots and other fancies; then stand for part of the day in some place of the camp to be admired by the women".<sup>2</sup> But after marriage there was no more painting except in red or yellow ochre. As there were few ornaments in the country they contented themselves with bears' claws and deer's teeth strung together and hung round the neck, and later on with beads and other baubles supplied them by the traders.

In speaking of the appearance of the women, Thompson showed himself to be more broadminded than Alexander Henry the Younger and many other traders, who found them repulsive. "On the first arrival of a stranger in a camp, who has never seen them, he may not find the young women so handsome as he could wish, for there is a line of beauty in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 349.

women which is somewhat different in every people and nation, but where, if the features are regular, we soon get habituated."<sup>1</sup>

The dress of the women was made of antelope skins, "fastened over the shoulders, belted round the waist and descends to their ankles, or to the ground", while that of the men consisted of a pair of long leggings (frequently trimmed with human hair) which came to the ground and would reach to the breast, and "secured by a belt, over which the rest hangs down. Some few wear a shirt of dressed leather, and both sexes wrap a bison robe round them."<sup>2</sup> They were an erect, graceful people who, with their arms folded under their robes seemed to glide over the prairie, in complete contrast to the awkward, slouching walk of the white man.

Marriages were commonly arranged by the female relatives of the young people, the usual age for women being sixteen and for the men twenty-two. Among all the Plains Indians adultery was punished with death. Sometimes young women who had been promised by their parents to be the fourth or fifth wife of some elderly man, eloped with their lovers. Provided they managed to escape it was often possible to arrange the affair amicably, but more often they were captured, and this usually meant death for the man, and for the woman the cutting off of her nose, a fate to which death was frequently regarded as being preferable.

Like the early English these Indians had a system of wergilds. The theft of a woman or a horse or any other article of value, could often be atoned for on the payment of a recognised amount according to the character of the crime. Their attitude to adultery was based not upon moral or religious considerations, but upon those of property, "as the best gift that Providence has given to them is to be their

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 349-50.

wives and mothers of their families; and without whom they cannot live."<sup>1</sup>

Above all other things the Indians hated avarice, which was only natural considering the precarious nature of their life. The sick and the wounded were always supplied, but being proud and haughty in nature, no Indian would ever make his wants known. An insult offered in public, no matter how trivial, was unforgiveable, and Thompson mentions the case of a woman whom her husband, in a fit of annoyance, had struck lightly with his whip. Coming out of her tent and standing before him she said: "You have before all these disgraced me; you shall never do it again", and drawing a sharp-pointed knife she plunged it into her heart, and fell dead.<sup>2</sup>

Strict discipline was maintained in camp by young men, who were under a special sub-chief and whom Thompson calls soldiers. They enforced the orders of the chiefs in camp and prevented any person from going to hunt the bison before the herd came near enough to be hunted by all, and those guilty of disobedience in this respect were deprived of their spoils, which were distributed throughout the camp.

The Blackfeet, like the Germans described by Tacitus, were inveterate gamblers. But as it was too dangerous for parties of braves to play against each other, the games were always between individuals who, however, on some occasions represented groups. They betted on competition between their horses in hunting, and they also played a game with a ring and two arrows, and "another game is small pieces of wood of different shapes, which are placed in a bowl and then [thrown] up a little way and caught in the bowl, and according as they lay the game is won or lost".<sup>3</sup>

Their favourite game, however, was a rudimentary kind

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 356.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 359.

of "Jenkin's up" which Thompson thus describes. "The Game to which all the Indians of the Plains are most addicted, and which they most enjoy, is by hiding in one of the hands some small flat thing, generally the flat tooth of a Red Deer, and the other party [has] to tell in which hand it is. It is played by two persons, but generally representing parties. It takes place in the early part of the night and continues a few hours. It is played in a large tent; the opposite parties sitting on different sides of the tent. In the hind part of the tent the Umpire sits with the stakes on each side. Both parties throwing their robes and upper dress off, and sit bare above the belt, and each having chosen its lucky man, the Umpire shows the Red Deer's tooth, which is marked to prevent being changed, he hides it in one of his hands, and the party that guesses the hand in which it is begins the game; its lucky man showing he has the tooth, begins a song in which his companions join him, he in the meantime throwing his arms and hands into every position; the other party are all quietly watching all his motions. In a few minutes he extends his arms straight forward with both hands closed, and about six inches apart, and thus holds them until the opposite party guess in which hand the tooth is; this is not always immediately done, but frequently after a short consultation; if they guess wrong, the other winning party continue with the same gesticulation and song as before, until a good guess is made and the tooth handed to the lucky man of the other party; and thus the game is continued until one of them counts ten, which is game. When the guess is made in which hand is the tooth, both hands are thrown open. The Umpire now takes the stakes of the losing party and places them on the side of the winning party, but keeps them separate. The losing party now hand to the Umpire another stake to regain the one they have lost. Thus the game continues with varied success until they are tired, or one party

cannot produce another stake; in this case the losing party either give up the stakes they have lost to the winners, or direct the Umpire to keep [them] for the renewal of the game the next night. However simple this game appears, it causes much excitement and deep attention in the players. The singing, the gesticulation, and the dark flashing eyes as if they would pierce through the body of him that has the tooth, their long hair, and muscular naked bodies, their excited, yet controlled countenances, seen by no other light than a small fire, would form a fine scene for an Artist."<sup>1</sup>

All these Indians believed in a supreme Being, who was master of life and death and to whom everything belonged. They believed him to be kind and beneficent and pleased to see mankind happy, but as to how far he would deign to intervene in their concerns, they were not agreed. While some believed that he would shape a man's destiny, the majority thought that every man was the master of his own fortune and that everything depended upon his own conduct. The Great Spirit was master of the seasons, of the animals and of everything else that they did not themselves control. Living in the wide plains where everything is visible, they were freer of superstitions than the Indians of the forest. They only addressed the Great Spirit on public occasions, that they might be successful in war, that they might be free from an epidemic of sickness, or that herds of fat bison might continue to feed in their country. They looked forward to a future life in which their surroundings would be similar to those of the present, only superior in the fineness of the seasons, the plenty of all kinds of provisions and the fleetness of the horses upon which they would hunt the bison and deer. Indeed, the fact that the horse which was a newcomer among them, so quickly became an asset to look forward to in the future life, shows that whatever the defects

<sup>1</sup> Thompson's *Narrative*, pp. 359-61.

of their religion were, it was at least elastic. In the future the good would be separated from the bad and would be troubled by them no more. The bad would be condemned to wander in darkness, from which they could not return, a darkness which was proportionate to their crimes.

The power of the chief depended mainly upon the influence which he exercised as an individual. The Indians resented the arbitrary exercise of authority or the assumption of any superiority on the part of the chiefs, and the latter were themselves very well aware that in government a chief was merely *primus inter pares* and was therefore bound always to be found in the place of greatest danger. As an illustration of how careful were the chiefs not to seem ambitious or unduly important, Thompson mentions the case of a coat which he gave to a certain chief, on account of the services rendered by him. He told the messenger that he was merely sending this coat together with some tobacco, as a recompense for his services. The interpreter however, being, as the chief afterwards stated, "a pompous fool", edited this message so as to give it a different meaning, just as Bismarck, though in a different way, edited the Ems telegram. The chief was informed that Thompson, having heard that he was a great man, wished him to wear this dress when leading his braves to battle. This potentate however, unlike Louis Napoleon, was not to be misled by this edited message, and not wishing to offend the trader he sent the coat together with the message, on to another chief, who in turn did likewise. Finally, having passed through the hands of six chiefs, it was sent to an old man who was not expected to live. He kept it and told the interpreter to thank the trader for sending him such a fine coat in which to be buried.

A certain number of young men did not become warriors but were trained for diplomacy. They, in their narrower sphere, made the "Grand Tour" and travelled among other

tribes where they studied their mode of warfare or their methods of hunting. Others took up the profession of prophet and foretold the place of the bison, the weather that was to be expected, and the more daring among them, the whereabouts of the camps of their enemies. This they usually did by dreams, which Thompson states, "are very useful among them for making bargains", buying or trading horses. Dreams were also very much in vogue when it came to arranging marriages and also when it was desired to give advice which, tendered in any other manner, would have been rejected. These prophets were obviously alive to the risks of their profession, and so, if what they foretold came to pass, they were declared to be wise men, but if their prophecy failed they said it was only a dream.

Even in Thompson's time, horse-stealing had become an honourable and skilled profession. He describes an instance in which some Stony Indians, who had lost their horses to the Blackfeet from whom they had recently stolen a large number, determined to try their fortune with the traders. Six men were specially chosen to carry through this difficult operation. In due course they found the traders' horses carefully watched by an armed guard. There was no particular hurry, so they waited six days for an opportunity, during which time they shot some antelope, and finally they decided to try their fortunes. Some of them disguised themselves with the antelope skins, while others put on buffalo horns, and, thus equipped, crept in among the horses and pretended to graze, much to the surprise of the guards, who had never seen such a phenomenon before. But at a pre-arranged signal they mounted and rode off.

The Piegan war chief was very much opposed to the sending out of small war-parties, or small parties of any kind, except for horse-stealing. Sometimes, in pursuit of their enemies, they travelled great distances. In 1787, for example,

a war-party sent out against the Snakes went so far south that it reached a party of Spaniards in charge of mules laden with silver. The Indians slew or drove off the Spaniards, threw away the silver, which they called white stone, and brought back the horses and mules. Thompson himself saw thirty of these horses and a dozen mules, together with Spanish saddles and harness, and he estimates that the raiders on this occasion travelled at least fifteen hundred miles in a direct line.

The next traveller of any note to visit these Indians was Alexander Henry the Younger, a man very much inferior to Thompson. He tended to judge the Indians solely from the point of view of their productivity as hunters, and as the Blackfeet would not hunt systematically and regularly for him, his opinion of them was far from flattering, and, incidentally, far from true. Either he was himself romancing, or the Indians were at their familiar game of telling the white man what they thought he wanted them to say. Whatever the reason, according to Henry, their religion was an unholy compound of Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, Norse mythology and a few characteristics appertaining to no previously known dogma.<sup>1</sup>

Henry admired the physique and stalwart bearing of the men. The older men, he says, wore the hair long, arranged in a knob that protruded some seven inches from the forehead, and besmeared with red earth. The hair of the young men hung smooth and loose about the face and was allowed to grow down so as to cover the tip of the nose, where it was cut off square. The women he considered a filthy set; they never combed their hair except with their fingers and wore it long about their neck, besmeared with red and lead-coloured earth, which gave them a savage appearance. Because poly-

<sup>1</sup> *Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry*, ed. by Elliott Coues, vol. ii. pp. 525 et seq.



gamy was practised and a man might have six or seven wives, he considered them a most licentious people.

Their tents were large and clean, rudely painted with representations of buffalo, bear and various birds. Many of their old warriors according to him, had killed twenty men, and he was accounted but an indifferent brave who had slain a paltry ten. Henry described their ceremony of smoking and how the pipe always went round with the sun, each warrior taking a few whiffs in turn, and how the tobacco must never be touched by the finger once it was lighted. Although the country abounded in beaver and much game, they would never hunt "with spirit, so that their principal produce is dry provision, buffalo robes, wolves, foxes and other meadow skins and furs of little value". The truth was of course, that the Blackfeet found it quite easy to kill all the animals they required for themselves, and they were not disposed to become the serfs of the white traders, merely in order to obtain a few blankets or beads or any other articles of luxury. Even in Henry's time these Indians appear to have been suffering from various diseases, including the smallpox which had killed off many of them, but in spite of all, they were still increasing.

Many other explorers and visitors to their country including Palliser, Hector and Butler, described these Indians, but they merely confirm the impression given by Thompson. "The Blackfeet tents", says Palliser, "are not only much larger than those of the Crees, but much better provided with internal accommodation such as leather curtains to protect them from draughts, bedding, kettles, tin plates and porringers, and, in a great many cases, with forks and spoons; the tents of the chiefs are about twenty or twenty-two feet in diameter", while the council tents were sometimes thirty feet in diameter.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Journals, etc. relative to the Exploration by Captain Palliser . . . during the years 1857, 1858, 1859, and 1860. Presented to both Houses of Parliament, May 19, 1863, p. 138.

In spite of Henry's suggestions to the contrary, chastity seems to have been insisted upon, and Steele describes how the faithful wife was honoured at the great spring meeting.<sup>1</sup> The whole tribe would be drawn up in two lines, the men in one, and the young women and children in the other. In the presence of all, the wife appeared before the medicine man of the occasion, from whom she received a piece of buffalo tongue, specially prepared, and returning to where the sun could shine upon her, "she held it up before the people calling all of them to witness that she was true to her husband and children and asking the Great Spirit to bless them and keep her virtuous until the next spring meeting". The women did not seem to be unhappy under the prevailing system of polygamy, and the wives usually lived amicably together. Southesk thought, and probably quite rightly, that the early missionaries were mistaken in requiring the Indians to put away all wives but one, for, as one old chief asked, "When I love all equally which one shall I retain?"

Perhaps the most notorious of all their institutions was the sun dance. This ceremony appears to have been the occasion for the fulfilment of conventional vows made during the preceding year, and was the grim gate through which the young man must pass to the full status of the warrior. It took place in an enclosure partly covered with boughs of trees, in the centre of which stood a tall pole. From the top of this pole there hung down ropes which varied in number according to that of the candidates for honours. Each of these latter was attached to the rope by a skewer which was passed through the fleshy part of each breast. The young man was expected to dance at full speed round this pole until he fainted from exhaustion or the flesh gave way and set him free. While the dance continued

<sup>1</sup> Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, p. 81

the would-be brave was expected to shout or sing or whistle. The performance was eagerly watched by admiring relatives and friends and accompanied by the beating of drums, until the newly made warrior gave his triumphal war-whoop. Sometimes it was hours before the struggling victim won through, and all the time, while suffering the most excruciating pain, he was expected to pull against his own flesh and never to show the slightest indication of suffering.

Another method in the sun dance was to cut slits in the lad's back in the same way and then, having passed a rope or thong under the muscles, to splice the rope and tie the other end to buffalo heads, the thong being made so short as to allow these heavy weights to dangle free of the ground. The candidate then proceeded to dance until the heads were torn loose. Still another method was to fasten a thong in the way already described and then to drag the unhappy wretch with horses until the tortured flesh gave way.<sup>1</sup> Women always attended the sun dance, and the mothers were as anxious as the candidates to see that their sons acquitted themselves well. Sometimes the 'bodily strength was not sufficient to bear up, and finally the tottering, swaying youth, his face set and grim, might shake one dangling skull loose but could not free himself of the other. The tribe would begin to grow restive and murmurs of contempt on the weakling would begin to be heard. But before the youth sunk in utter exhaustion and defeat his mother would rush in, and seizing the buffalo head drag her son till eventually the boy was free and had been made a brave.

At best, the life of the Blackfoot must have approximated very nearly to that of a man in the natural state as described by Hobbes. It was very often in truth "nasty, brutish and short". His very existence depended upon the buffalo, whose

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, pp. 82-3.

flesh was almost his only food. From its skin he made his cloths, his tents, his bedding, his harness and his saddles, while buffalo chips (dung) supplied him with fuel for his fire.


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These savages were magnificent people, worthy of the country in which they lived. Trained from their earliest years to ride and to manage horses, accustomed to discipline and taught to obey, they had many qualities that any nation might be proud to possess. They had a rude eloquence of their own, and their medicine men were unsurpassed in the variety and efficiency of their incantations. These tall, lithe, splendid horsemen won golden opinions from the Mounted Police, while they in turn earned the respect and esteem of these aristocrats of the prairie. A great deal too much has been written and said about the so-called "vanishing race", for almost always, when the American Indian is referred to, it is assumed that he must inevitably disappear. Indeed, there is much to suggest that this miasma of hopelessness has been one of the causes of his decay. No one can say precisely how much the Indians have declined since the white man first came among them. Simpson estimated that there were between fifty and sixty thousand Indians on the plains in the fifties of the last century, and if the number had decreased since then it is certain that this decline is greater than it should have been, as many of the causes that brought it about were undoubtedly avoidable. Moreover, when it is remembered that the introduction of the gun and the horse increased the savagery of native warfare, and that they were, in addition, afflicted in the space of less than a century by several epidemics of smallpox, measles and other diseases, it is remarkable, not that they have declined, but that any of them survive at all. But as will be shown later, these trials were nothing as compared with the last terrible wrench with their past which came in 1877.

The people of the West are not as proud of their Indians as they should be. There has been too much of the tendency to think of them as so much comic material to be produced on gala days to make a shopkeeper's holiday, and too little realisation of the fact that they, and not the gaping crowds that at stampede time sit in the grand stands, are the real people of Alberta.

## CHAPTER II

### FUR TRADERS AND EXPLORERS



WHILE the fur trade was vigorously prosecuted on the North Saskatchewan, the Peace River and the Mackenzie, the Bow River District as it was called, remained practically untouched. The mountains had been crossed and trading posts were established on the Thompson, the Fraser and the Columbia long before the south country was anything more than *terra incognita*. The reasons for this apparent neglect are not far to seek. The sinister reputation of the Blackfoot confederation was such as to dissuade all but the most hardy from visiting their territory. In any case, it was generally believed that the land was mostly desert, poorly stocked with game and therefore of little interest to the fur trader.

The Hudson's Bay Company posts were to be found east, north and west, and American traders and soldiers had appeared in the south, but the Blackfeet, with their backs to the mountains and their flanks defended by the South Saskatchewan and the Missouri, still held their territory inviolate. The history of the Hudson's Bay Company and the romantic story of the North-West traders from Montréal and the long-drawn-out rivalry between these two, the struggle for supremacy, the bloodshed and ultimate amalgamation have little to do with the Blackfoot country. Only a backwash of the Red River rebellion, and later on the rising of '85 which convulsed the Territories, was felt in Southern Alberta. Indeed, down to 1905, the history of Southern

Alberta was, to a certain extent, distinct from that of the rest of the prairie country.

Some writers have contended that La Vérendrye's sons were the first white men ever to visit the Blackfoot country. This contention, however, is largely based upon conjecture and a misreading of Vérendrye's *Memoirs*. In 1742 Pierre de la Vérendrye set out from Fort La Reine for the Mardan villages on the Missouri, which his father had visited in 1738. There he secured guides, who agreed to conduct him to "Les Gens des Chevaux". Travelling south-west from the Missouri they reached Les Gens des Chevaux on November 9, and on November 29 came to Les Gens de l'Arc, the people of the Bow. Later he accompanied a party of Bow Indians against their enemies the Snakes, and first saw the Rocky Mountains on New Year's Day, 1743, and reached them on January 12. After that the party returned along the route by which it had come, and reached Fort La Reine on the following July 2.<sup>1</sup> According to Parkman they went via the Little Missouri, Powder River Mountains and Tongue River to the Bighorn Mountains. Burpee however, thinks that Granville Stuart comes nearer the truth, when he says that they went in a more westerly direction than that put forward by Parkman, and probably reached a point somewhere nearer the present site of Helena, Montana. In any case, it is fairly clear that on this journey they were always far to the south of the forty-ninth parallel, and therefore never came near Southern Alberta. Again, as far as the Canadian explorations of the Vérendryes are concerned, the forks of the Saskatchewan probably mark the most westerly point reached by these intrepid Frenchmen.

After almost twenty years' constant exploration in the west, the Sieur de la Vérendrye in 1749 died with his great quest

<sup>1</sup> *Journals and Letters of La Vérendrye and Sons*, pp. 406 et seq. Also Burpee, *Search for the Western Sea*, pp. 234 et seq.

still incomplete. But he had carried the French flag from the confines of New France to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and had claimed all that vast region for his unworthy master, Louis XV, the monarch who was willing to accept the most ungrudging labour in his service, but to give nothing in return. The brave old explorer may well have met his end fortified by the belief that, although he had failed to complete the great task he had set himself, or at most had been only partially successful, his gallant sons would carry it through to glorious fulfilment. But this was not to be. In the story of Western exploration, as in almost the whole of French history in the eighteenth century, France was served by high-souled patriots in the distant parts of her empire, whose magnificent work and splendid ambitions were frustrated largely by the sycophants who directed her government. Dupleix, Lally and Montcalm, to mention but three, never received the support which they deserved, and to these three must be added Le Sieur de la Vérendrye and his sons. La Jonquière, Governor of New France, refused to allow La Vérendrye's sons, who were already distinguished explorers themselves, to complete their father's work. He saw that the opening up of the western fur trade would lead to great riches, and he was resolved that those riches should flow into his own pockets. Captain Jacques Repentigny Legardeur de Saint-Pierre was therefore sent out to replace the Vérendryes and to take charge of the western posts. That officer, on his arrival in the west, at once despatched one of his lieutenants, De Niverville, up the Saskatchewan with instructions to establish a fort beyond the farthest point yet reached by the French explorers. On his way up however, De Niverville fell ill, but ordered his men to continue the journey. When they returned they asserted that they had reached the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and that they had built a fort there, which they named in honour of the governor, Fort la



Jonquière. According to De Niverville, this post was some three hundred leagues up the Saskatchewan from Fort Paskoya, but there seems to be some doubt whether he himself ever saw the post which his men are supposed to have founded. The site of this post is still a matter of speculation, for there is nothing to show in available documents whether it was established on the North or on the South Saskatchewan. Coues suggests that it was built on the south branch, at or near the site of the present city of Calgary. Masson is even more definite on this subject. "En 1752 (which should be 1751) quelques années seulement avant la conquête, un parent le M. de la Vérendrye, M. de Niverville établissait le fort Jonquière au pied des montagnes, à l'endroit même au plus d'un siècle après le capitaine Brisebois, de police à cheval, fondait une poste qui porta pendant quelques mois le nom de son fondateur, et se nomme aujourd'hui Calgary." Brisbois believed that his post was on the site of the old French fort, and he stated that he had found traces of it when he first arrived there. Tyrrell however, argues in favour of the North Saskatchewan, on the ground that the Indians of that area were known to be friendly, but Hendry, who visited the Blackfeet three years later, does not speak of them as being particularly hostile to white men. Further, against the North Saskatchewan it may be urged that the definite and avowed policy of the French was at all costs to avoid coming in contact with the English, and they would naturally therefore have gone south whenever possible. If in fact this fort was ever established at all, the weight of evidence appears to favour the South Saskatchewan. Considering that the whole story depends on the verbal statements of Canadian voyageurs, whose propensity to exaggeration is well known, and who in any case, would be anxious to please their master, it is possible that the fort never existed except in the fertile mind of some Gustave, Jean Baptiste, or Pierre. Certainly Hendry, who

spent a whole winter with the Blackfeet, and wandered about with them from camp to camp, never heard the slightest rumour of such an establishment—a fact which speaks for itself. Such a thing as a strongly built white man's trading post would have been such a phenomenon among the Indians that they would certainly have mentioned it to their white guest, if they had known about it, and that it could exist without their knowledge is impossible.

Dr. John McDougall, who spent the greater part of his life among the Alberta Indians, and who knew them and their traditions perhaps better than any other white man, thus concludes on this subject: "Moreover, if such a fort had been built on or near the site of the present city of Calgary, say 250 years since, surely there would be strong physical evidence of same. Such is the character of the soil and climate of the Bow River Valley that any disturbance of its surface, unless carefully replaced by the hand of man, will remain for a long period of time. Buffalo 'trails' and 'dust-pans' many hundreds of years old are still strongly in evidence and must be ploughed and harrowed out of existence, and I will warrant that if an old mud-roofed fort called 'Fort Brisbois', built in 1875 by the Mounted Police, had been burnt down some years later and all white men had gone out of the country, and remained out of same for the next 250 years, that then there would be apparent strong evidence of this fort having been built on this spot, and I contend that the building of a fort in the 1700's would leave more, far more, evidence of having been here than 'Fort Brisbois' could. In those days all the heating was done by huge chimneys of stone and mud, and wherever these were built they remain, unless removed by the hand of man. To-day the chimney mounds of 'Bow Fort' are as distinct as they were when I first saw them in 1873. Thirty-eight years have made no changes with them, and I feel

sure that 300 years would make but little change with them, that is if our climatic conditions would remain, as doubtless they have for the last many centuries."<sup>1</sup>

But supposing that this fort was established, and that it was three hundred French leagues up the Saskatchewan from Fort Paskoya, which is very much open to doubt, not only because of the romantic tendencies of the voyageurs, but because of the impossibility of exact reckoning among them; if on the South Saskatchewan it must have been somewhere just above the confluence of the Bow and Belly rivers; if on the North Saskatchewan, just below Edmonton, and in either case far from the foot of the Rocky Mountains. There is a certain poetic justice in the fact that this mythical fort, which was named in honour of the unscrupulous despoiler of the noble Vérendrye family, should have disappeared so completely, if it ever existed, and become so much a matter of mere speculation and conjecture.

Three years after the supposed foundation of Fort La Jonquière, the first Englishman ever to visit Saskatchewan and to reach Southern Alberta, made his appearance in the west. This was Anthony Hendry, a native of the Isle of Wight, who had been outlawed for smuggling in 1748. Apparently his free-trade activities were based on no particular devotion to the principle involved, since he is next heard of as a servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, one of the closest trade monopolies then in existence. In other respects however, Hendry seems to have been well fitted for the career of an explorer. He was bold and resourceful in spirit, and judging by his conduct of the negotiations with the Indians, and the descriptions of them that he has left behind, he must have been a man of keen understanding and broad sympathy.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. John McDougall in *Morning Albertan*, March 2, 1911.

Quoted by MacRae, *History of the Province of Alberta*, p. 4.

Hendry left York Fort on Hudson's Bay, on June 26, 1754, and travelling in canoes by Stony River, Steel River, Oxford Lake, Cross Lake, Pine River and Moose Lake, he first saw the Saskatchewan on July 21. About twenty-two miles up-stream he came to a French fort, Pasquia. Having stayed a night with the French, whom he found perfectly polite, he proceeded up the Saskatchewan, which he quitted about six miles above the French fort. Thence he journeyed by Sakeram Lake and Carrot River, and on July 27 left his canoes and continued his journey overland across the Pasquia Hills.

On August 13 Hendry wrote in his Journal: "We are now entering the Muscuty Plains and shall soon see plenty of buffalo and the Archithinue Indians hunting them on Horseback".<sup>1</sup> On August 15 he sighted his first buffalo, and hearing that the main body of the Blackfeet had gone north-west in pursuit of the herd itself, Hendry proceeded in that direction, and on August 20 crossed the South Saskatchewan at Clarke's Crossing. Three days later, he reached the North Saskatchewan somewhere between the mouth of Eagle Creek and the Elbow. He followed that stream for some distance, and leaving it, continued in a south-westerly direction, according to him about two hundred and seventy miles, and crossed the Red Deer River between Knee Hills Creek and Three Hills Creek on October 11. Three days later he came up with the main body of the Blackfeet, twenty-three miles south-west-by-west from where he had crossed the Red Deer.

On October 14 Hendry reached the Indian camp, where he was entertained by the chief, attended by twenty elders, in a tent large enough to accommodate fifty persons. The chief, who was seated on a "clear" (white) buffalo skin, made signs to Hendry to sit down beside him on his right hand. Then, when the ceremonial pipes had been smoked in silence

<sup>1</sup> Burpee, *Search for the Western Sea*, p. 123.

by the Indians and their guests, boiled buffalo flesh was served to the strangers in baskets made of bent wood. As a mark of special distinction Hendry was presented with ten buffalo tongues, considered by the Indians to be a great delicacy. The guide then told the chief that Hendry had been sent by the leader, who lived down at the great waters, to invite his young men down to see him and to bring with them beaver skins and wolf skins, and that they would receive powder, shot, guns, cloth, beads and other things in return. Thereupon the chief merely remarked that it was too far off and his young men could not paddle. After some general conversation between the guide and the chief, Hendry and his party were ordered to depart to their own tents, which were pitched about a quarter of a mile outside the Indian encampment.

On the following morning, while the women of Hendry's party were employed in dressing beaver skins as clothing, their leader was once more bidden to present himself before the Archithinue chief. Through his interpreter Hendry again told the chief why he had been sent, and asked him to allow some of his young men to go down to the Bay with him. He assured the chief that they would be well received and would obtain all they required. But the latter once more observed that the Bay was far off, his young men could not live without buffalo flesh, and it was impossible for them to leave their horses. Even supposing this were not so, and even if they understood the use of the canoe, they could not live on fish. Further, why should his people go so far when they never wanted for anything in their own country, or why should they want powder and shot and guns when they could easily kill all the buffalo they required with bows and arrows? He was informed moreover, that natives who frequented the settlements were oftentimes starved on their journey. "Such remarks I thought exceeding true", observed

Hendry. In order to show that there was no ill-feeling however, and that he wanted to be as friendly as possible to the stranger, he presented the trader with a handsome bow and arrow. In return, according to the instructions received from his superior, Hendry gave the chief a sample of every kind of commodity he had with him and then went out to look at the camp.

This consisted of about two hundred tents pitched close together, with a broad street running down between and open at both ends. In order not to be surprised by the enemy, Hendry states that in moving about from place to place they were always careful to pitch their camp on the open plains. This first English visitor to the Blackfeet was much impressed with their obvious superiority to the Crees. "They are a clean people and more sprightly than other natives." He was also impressed with the quality of their horses which, he says, were "fine tractable animals, about fourteen hands high, lively and cleanly made". He also speaks highly of their good order and discipline. Each morning and evening the chief sent out reconnoitring parties in search of enemies, while other parties went in search of provisions. "Their clothing", he adds, "is finely painted with red paint, like unto English ochre, but they do not mark nor paint their bodies." The only thing which Hendry was not favourably impressed with among these people was their tobacco, which he says is dried horse-dung, but apparently the Blackfeet held equally unflattering opinions of the trader's own commodity.

Hendry remained three days with this band and then proceeded in a south-westerly direction, crossing Knee Hills Creek, sixty miles from the point at which he had crossed the Red Deer. He followed in the same direction about six miles and then worked his way gradually round to his right until he was travelling due north, on a line roughly parallel with the Calgary-Edmonton trail, and on November 21

he reached latitude  $51^{\circ} 50'$  north, longitude  $113^{\circ} 50'$  west, that is about nine hundred and forty-five miles from York Fort.<sup>1</sup> Hendry wintered with the Blackfeet and probably wandered over a great deal of the Bow River district with them. On December 23 he crossed Three Hills Creek, and had his last view of the Muscuty Plains between that stream and Devil's Pine Creek. On March 3 he was on the Red Deer somewhere about Tail Creek, and on April 23 he started paddling down the Saskatchewan. Having built some new canoes for his return journey, he started paddling down the Red Deer on April 28. A few miles below the Grand Forks of the Saskatchewan, he came to a French fort, an outpost of Fort Pasquia, where he was hospitably entertained by the officer in charge. Six days later he reached Fort Pasquia itself and spent some time with De La Corne. He left the fort on June 3, and on June 20 reached York Fort. His stories of Indians mounted on horseback were greeted with derision by those in authority on the Bay. Thus with Hendry as later on with Thompson, the Hudson's Bay Company failed to recognise a good man when it had one, and this first explorer of the Blackfeet country was hounded out of the company's service.

The next account of the Blackfoot is given by Cocking, who met them on December 1, 1772, though he does not appear to have entered their territory. He also speaks of their marked superiority to other Indians and states that they were well mounted on sprightly animals. Some of them wore sleeveless moose-skin jackets, "six fold and quilted". The women used pack-horses to carry the baggage which gave them an advantage over the Indian women of other tribes, who from year's end to year's end did the packing

<sup>1</sup> Burpee in *The Search for the Western Sea* points out that Graham's statement that Hendry reached latitude  $59^{\circ}$  north is obviously wrong, for this would have meant that he was in the Peace River and Athabasca district.

themselves or with dogs. He mentions their great hospitality, as they were continually inviting his companions and himself to sample their choicest dishes of berries (probably Saskatoons) infused in water and fat which, he says, was very agreeable, though it certainly does not sound very appetising to the modern reader.

"Their manner of showing respect to strangers is in holding the pipe while they smoke: this is done three times. Afterwards every person smokes in common; the women excepted; whom I did not observe to take the Pipe. The tobacco they use is of their own planting, which hath a disagreeable flavour; I have preserved a specimen. These people are much more cleanly in their cloathing and food than my companions: [Crees]. Their Victuals are dressed in earthen pots of their own manufacturing; much in the same form as Newcastle pots, but without feet."<sup>1</sup> In making fires they used a black stone as flint and a piece of some kind of ore as steel with tuss balls as tinder (a kind of moss).

The next white man of any note to visit the Blackfeet country was one of the most remarkable figures in the whole history of British North American exploration. David Thompson was born in Westminster on April 30, 1770, and attended the Grey Coat School from 1777 to 1784, when he was apprenticed to the Hudson's Bay Company for seven years. While in school he had chiefly studied geography, mathematics and navigation, and this, together with the little instruction he was given by Turner, was the only training he ever had. When only nineteen he took a series of astronomical observations and placed Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan, where he then was, in north latitude 53° 56' 44" and west longitude 102° 13'. This position was

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada*, Third Series, Vol. ii., May 1908. (*Journal of Mathew Cocking, from York Factory to the Blackfeet country, 1772-1773*. Edited by L. J. Burpee, p. 111). The *Handbook of the Indians of Canada* states that the Blackfeet had no pottery among them.



changed many times, but finally returned to the place where Thompson had fixed it one hundred and twenty-five years ago. "Such was the beginning of his long career of geodetic surveying which was to make him the greatest practical land geographer that the world has produced. Very few men have had the opportunity of exploring the half of a great new continent, and no one else has ever seized the opportunity as David Thompson did. For many thousands of miles, in pursuit of my work when engaged as a geologist on the staff of the Geological Survey of Canada between the years 1883 and 1898, it was my good fortune to travel over the same routes that he had travelled a century before, and to take observations on the sun and stars on the very spots where he had observed; and while my instruments may have been better than his, his surveys and observations were invariably found to have an accuracy that left little or nothing to be desired."<sup>1</sup>

In almost every respect Thompson was not only the mental, but the moral superior of all his contemporaries, not excepting Mackenzie. Unlike most of the men about him, and the majority of the fur traders who came after him, he did not believe that Englishmen should leave their morals and religion behind them when they took service with a fur-trading company. He was properly married to the half-breed girl Charlotte Small, and when finally he left the country she accompanied him and was not left behind and forgotten as was the case generally. Again he was an enemy to the trade in alcohol, both on moral grounds as well as from economic considerations. On one occasion when, against his will, his partners obliged him to carry two kegs of alcohol with him he placed them on a vicious horse with the result that by noon the two kegs were empty. "I wrote to my partners what I had done, and that I would do the

<sup>1</sup> Tyrrell, Introduction to David Thompson's *Narrative*, p. xxxii.

same to every keg of alcohol, and for the next six years I had charge of the fur trade on the west side of the Mountains, no further attempt was made to introduce spirituous liquors."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his whole life in the West, Thompson was first and foremost an explorer, and a trader very much second. It was natural that a man of his type was able to understand and to appreciate the qualities of the savage tribes among whom so many years of his life were spent. Fortunately he was a voluminous writer, and his Journals and Papers throw a great deal of light on the condition of the country, the conduct of the fur trade and the character of the Indians. Other explorers in his own day and since have received greater praise, but although he died in poverty and without recognition, and although he lies in an unknown grave, few men in Canadian history have more reason to be remembered, and like Champlain, La Vérendrye, Montcalm, Wolfe, Carlton and Brock, Thompson should be venerated as one of the national heroes of the Dominion.

Since the Treaty of Paris, some twenty-one years before Thompson first appeared at York Fort, the French share of the fur trade had passed into the hands of the Montreal traders, chiefly Scotsmen, who pushed the business with such vigour, that the Hudson's Bay Company was at last stirred into action. When Montreal traders were moving up the Saskatchewan and establishing posts in the north country, it was obviously no longer possible to adhere to the old policy of waiting at the Forts on the Bay for the Indians to come down with their furs. The Hudson's Bay Company, therefore, extended its posts further and further into the interior as the century drew to its close. About 1786 Thompson, among others, took part in the establishment of a new post called Manchester House, about forty miles up the Sas-

<sup>1</sup> Tyrrell, Introduction to David Thompson's *Narrative*, pp. vii. and viii.

katchewan from the present town of Battleford. In the hope that the Western Plains Indians might be induced to procure beaver and other valuable skins, a party under Thompson was sent out from Manchester House to visit the Blackfeet and win their friendship. The party travelled south-west from Manchester House to the Bow River, which they struck somewhere in the vicinity of the present site of Calgary, where they found a large camp of Piegan. Having sent back some of his companions to Manchester House, Thompson remained for the winter with the Indians, living in the tent of an old chief called Sankamapee. Although at the time he was only sixteen years of age, he won the confidence and the lasting friendship of the chief and his tribe, a friendship that was destined to be of great service to him in later years. "The Bow River", which of course at that time meant the whole of the South Saskatchewan, "flows through the most pleasant of the plains and is the great resort of bison, the red deer, and the natives." Thompson comments favourably upon the quality of the soil in the river valley, which was mostly bare of woods, and says that the trees which still remained were fast disappearing owing to the prevalence of prairie fires.

Some conception of the precarious nature of the life of the Indians may be gathered from the fact that, even at this early date, the buffalo were scarce. This was undoubtedly only a temporary condition, but it is none the less significant. "We found a camp on the south side of the Bow River, from its tender grass a favourite haunt of the bison, yet this camp had only provision by daily hunting, and our frequent removals led us over a vast tract of country on which we rarely found the bison to be numerous." As a result of these frequent removals, Thompson became fairly familiar with much of what is now Southern Alberta and thoroughly acquainted with its savage inhabitants, so that when he

returned to Manchester House in the spring, he had already gathered much of the material upon which two of the most interesting chapters in his narrative are based.

Fourteen years after his first visit, Thompson was again in the Bow River district, but on this occasion he came not as a humble apprentice of the Hudson's Bay Company, but as a partner of the North-West Company. On November 17, 1800, accompanied by Duncan McGillivray and attended by four men, he set out on horseback on the trail up Clearwater River, across the Red Deer, and reached the Bow once more near the present site of Calgary, latitude  $51^{\circ} 2' 56''$  north, longitude  $113^{\circ} 59'$  west. He then followed the Bow River, keeping on the north-eastern side, down past the bend, where he crossed it and proceeded to Spitzee or High Wood River, which he reached two miles above its mouth and not far from where the Prince of Wales' ranch now is. Thence he went slightly west of south, reaching a camp of Piegan Indians in  $50^{\circ} 35' 30''$  north, and Tyrrell suggests this was probably on Tongue Flag Creek.<sup>1</sup>

Having spent a few days in friendly intercourse with his old friends, Thompson once more renewed his journey, travelling in a north-westerly direction. He reached the Bow once more at a point which he places at  $51^{\circ} 13' 57''$  north,  $114^{\circ} 48' 22''$  west, a short distance above the mouth of the Ghost River.<sup>2</sup> He then followed the stream upwards, first on the south bank for about three miles, and then on the north bank as far as the site of the present town of Exshaw. Retracing his steps, he once more came to his old camp on the Bow near Calgary, and then struck across-country to Rocky Mountain House, which he reached on December 3.

Thus in his two journeys to the Piegan, he had probably travelled over a good deal of Southern Alberta, for it is

<sup>1</sup> Tyrrell, Introduction to Thompson's *Narrative*, Itinerary, p. lxxx.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

almost certain that at the time of his first visit, while wandering about with the Indians, he went further south than Tongue Flag Creek. While at Rocky Mountain House in 1800, Thompson despatched four men down the Red Deer River to the South Saskatchewan, who were thus, with the possible exception of Hendry, the first men to paddle down the head waters of that river.

After Thompson, the next traveller of note in the Bow River country was Peter Fidler, who also in his own way was a remarkable person. Like Thompson, he travelled over a vast area in his various wanderings, and also like Thompson wrote voluminous notes, but unlike his, Fidler's notes are lost. He entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1791, and in the following year left Fort George on the North Saskatchewan, for the south country.<sup>1</sup> He crossed the Battle River, the Red Deer, the Bow and finally reached the Little Bow at the foot of the mountains. He spent some time in that neighbourhood, as he appears to have wintered there, and returned in the following year, 1793, by a more easterly route than his former one. He crossed the Red Deer at the mouth of the Rosebud Creek, which he called Edge Coal Creek. In 1800, Fidler once more visited this district, together with Belleau and John Wills. He ascended the Bow River as far as Chesterfield House at the forks of the Red Deer and the Bow. Fidler's various routes appear on Arrow-smith's maps of 1801 and 1811. In the meantime, probably on the recommendation of Thompson after his first visit to the Piegan, the Hudson's Bay Company determined to develop the trade with these Indians and their allies. The first post established on the Bow, as the South Saskatchewan was then called, was South Branch House, occupying a position on that river which corresponded with the site of the later Fort Carlton on the north branch. This post appears

<sup>1</sup> Burpee, *Search for the Western Sea*, p. 175.

to have been in existence as early as 1790, and when Thompson visited the place in 1793 the Hudson's Bay and the North-West Companies both had establishments there.<sup>1</sup> In 1794 the Hudson's Bay Post was attacked by Indians, according to some writers, a party of Sioux raiders. All its inmates were murdered except one man, who escaped to the near-by North-West post. The garrison of this latter place managed to hold out during the day, but under cover of darkness the position was evacuated.

For some time after this the Blackfeet were left in the enjoyment of their own country and with the exception of Thompson, no trader came near them for about ten years. Finally in 1805, John Macdonald of Garth, a noted figure of the time, determined to establish a new post as far up the South Branch as possible. With twenty-five men and four canoes he proceeded up this river, which he calls the Bow, and built West Chesterfield House. Although it is difficult to place the site of this post, it is clear that he went above the Elbow, and the new post was probably established somewhere near the mouth of the Red Deer. Macdonald wintered at this place and in the spring, with his canoes laden, he returned down-stream and the new fort was abandoned.

For the next seventeen years no attempt was made to develop the trade with the Plains Indians of the south-west. But in 1822, shortly after the amalgamation of the two companies, a large party of over a hundred men, under Donald Mackenzie, was sent up the South Saskatchewan to re-establish Chesterfield House. This place appears on Palliser's map as being on the north side of the Red Deer River, about three miles above its confluence with the South Saskatchewan, probably on a tongue of land three miles below the present town of Empress. This post, though strongly

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of Calgary Historical Society*, J. W. Wallace, D.L.S.  
*Early Explorations along the Bow and Saskatchewan.*

held, was frequently in serious danger from the Indians; and in the course of a few years proved far too costly in men and money proportionate to the meagre trade in furs resulting, and it was therefore abandoned. There is a tradition that Thompson in 1802 established another post about fifty miles up the Bow River from Calgary, commonly known as Bow Fort. Thompson himself does not however, mention this place, nor does it appear on his great map of 1812, and moreover, John Macdonald of Garth nowhere refers to it in his Memoir. Masson's statement is based upon a reference in a letter from William MacGillivray to Alexander Fraser, dated July 25, 1804, in which the establishment on the Bow River is mentioned. But this may merely mean the South-Saskatchewan, which, it has already been shown, this river was called all the way up from the Forks.

Again, this post has sometimes been confused with the South Branch House, on the South Saskatchewan, which was destroyed by the Indians in 1794. This early foundation of Bow Fort, in fact seems to be as mythical as the notorious Fort La Jonquière, for there appears to be no reference to it in contemporary Hudson's Bay records.<sup>1</sup> The Minutes of Council 1832, would seem however, to throw light upon the date of the foundation of this place: "The recent defection of the Piegan Tribe rendering it unnecessary to maintain the Rocky Mountain House which was originally established for their convenience, it is Resolved. 34. To abandon that post and to establish a new post to be called the Piegan Post on the borders of the 49th parallel of Latitude, with a view to attract that tribe, and to prevent other Indians who are in the habit of frequenting the Honble. Company's Posts in the upper part of the Saskatchewan from crossing the line."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oliver, E. H., *The Canadian North-West. Its Early Development and Legislative Records*, vol. i. p. 678.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of Calgary Historical Society*, J. E. A. Macleod, "Notes on Old Bow Fort".

Owing partly to the expense in carrying furs overland from the Bow to the North Saskatchewan, but more it seems, because of the truculence of the Indians, Piegan Post was only occupied for about five months, from August 10, 1833, to January 5, 1834. Rocky Mountain House was therefore once more occupied and a reference to it appears in the Minutes of 1834. A comparison of the names of the men who were in charge of Piegan Post with those who are traditionally supposed to have built Bow Fort, establishes the fact that they were the same people. The ruins of Old Bow Fort are still plainly visible at the junction of Bow River and old Fort Creek on the Stony Indian Reserve, and there are no other known ruins on the Upper Bow. It is to be noted that in the Minute quoted above, it is not suggested that the re-establishment of an old post was contemplated but rather that an entirely new departure in policy was intended. Macleod comes to the conclusion, which seems incontrovertible, that Piegan Post and Bow Fort were the same place, the former being the name given to it by the Company, and the latter that by which it was familiarly known by men on the spot.

Had it not been for the growing hostility of the Indians, it seems that from about the beginning of the nineteenth century Howse Pass might well have become the normal route between the prairie and New Caledonia. Thompson, in 1807, proceeded up the North Saskatchewan from Rocky Mountain House and crossed the mountains by that pass, which he appears to have used on several occasions in the course of the next two or three years. His old friends the Piegan however, in 1810, believing that he was destroying their power by furnishing firearms to their enemies beyond the mountains, stopped his brigade in Howse Pass and gave him to understand that, great as was their affection for him, they would nevertheless be obliged to take his life if he per-



sisted in his trade with the Kootenays. In these circumstances, Thompson decided to discover another route further to the north, and finally selected Athabasca Pass, which was well out of the reach of his friends in the south.

From then on, this route up the Saskatchewan to Edmonton, thence north-west overland to the Assiniboine and up that river and the Athabasca to the Pass, became the normal route between the prairie and New Caledonia for the fur trade. Of the sixty passes through the Rockies which are now known to exist in Alberta, only three were known by 1811, the Peace River Gap, through which Sir Alexander Mackenzie had gone on his great journey to the Pacific, the Athabasca and Howse Passes. But while the trail to New Caledonia was thus far to the north, trading posts in that area were pushed south along the Columbia so that, had it not been for Indian hostilities, several other routes would have been much more convenient, and the fact that they were not used is a measure of the dread with which the Blackfeet were regarded.

Even Sir George Simpson, almost at the end of his long career, stated in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee in 1857, that he had only used three passes, probably the Peace River Gap, the Athabasca and Simpson's Pass, which he himself had discovered. He crossed the mountains by the pass which now bears his name on August 2, 1841, and appears to have been the first white man to cross the mountains that way. About the same time that Simpson was making this journey, a party of emigrants had set out from the Red River for Colville on the Columbia, where the Hudson's Bay Company had recently started to develop stock-raising and agriculture on an extensive scale. This party was deserted by its guide, who was afraid to venture into the Blackfoot country, before they reached the mountains. A friendly Indian was finally induced to lead them into New

Caledonia, and he appears to have brought them through a pass, about twenty-five miles south of Simpson's Pass (Wallace suggests Whitman's Pass) to Windermere, where they joined Simpson. This route seems to have been used to a certain extent during the next few years. Simpson was favourably impressed with it. It was on his advice apparently, that Warre and Vavasour used it in 1845, when they were sent out to discover a satisfactory military route for the movement of troops across British North America. Another party of emigrants from Red River, on their way to the Columbia, crossed the mountains by the Kananaskis Pass, as some parts of their waggons were found there by the Palliser expedition four years later. Apart from such travellers as these and a few hunters, the Blackfoot country was left to itself by white men throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Alexander Henry the Younger did not himself venture very far into this district, and his descriptions of the Blackfeet and his opinions of them were based on what he had seen of these Indians in the neighbourhood of the Forts. "We see but little of the white man", said the chief Pe-to-pe to Hector in 1857, "and our young men do not know how to behave. But if you come among us the chiefs will restrain the young men, for we have power over them." Apparently the old warrior did not look upon the coming of the white men with any degree of pleasure, for he went on to say, "But look at the Crees, they have long lived in the company of white men, and nevertheless they are just like dogs, they try to bite when your head is turned—they have no manners, but the Blackfeet have large hearts and they love to show hospitality".

## CHAPTER III

### THE END OF COMPANY RULE

By the middle of the nineteenth century it was clear that the days of the Hudson's Bay Company's predominance in the North-West were numbered. With the principles of the Manchester School in the ascendant, and free trade the watchword of Mid-Victorian statesmen, the time was not favourable to trading monopolies. In 1858 the last vestiges of Company rule in India had been swept away in the din and clamour that followed on the Mutiny, and there were many, both in England and in Canada, who would gladly have vindicated the principles of free trade in the Far North-West.

In Canada the end of Company rule was desired for a variety of reasons. Some Canadian statesmen, perplexed by the unending succession of deadlocks in government, believed that with the realisation of a united self-governing British North America, whose territories stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the 49th parallel to the Arctic, a more generous spirit would be breathed into Canadian politics. Local petty questions would diminish to their proper proportions; and when called upon to administer half a continent, instead of a province, Canadian politicians would be worthy of their task, and would be able to look at all questions, whether great or small, from a broader point of view.

Furthermore, about the middle of the nineteenth century the people of Canada began to turn their eyes to the Far

West. The story of American western expansion was well known to all, and many Canadians were anxious to repeat in their own hinterland what had already been done south of the boundary line. They saw in the prairies a new field for settlement and fur-trade development. Joseph Howe, in one of his prophetic moments, looked forward to the time when British North America would be one country, stretching from ocean to ocean and from the American frontier to the North Pole. "The Hudson's Bay territory includes 250,000 miles. Throwing aside the more bleak and inhospitable regions we have a magnificent country between Canada and the Pacific, out of which five or six noble provinces may be formed, larger than any we have, and presenting to the hand of industry and to the eye of speculation, every variety of soil, climate and resource. I am neither a prophet, nor a son of a prophet, yet I believe that many in this room will live to hear the whistle of the steam-engine in the passes of the Rocky Mountains and to make the journey from Halifax to the Pacific in five or six days. With such objects in view;—with the means before us to open up one thousand miles of this noble territory, to increase its resources and lay bare its treasures, surely all petty jealousies and personal rivalries should stand rebuked, all minor questions of mere local interest should give way."<sup>1</sup>

There were others who desired the end of Hudson's Bay rule in the North-West, from less exalted motives. These men had an exaggerated notion of the wealth that was annually harvested by the old Company. They knew what the North-West Company had done and they were anxious to follow in its footsteps, and deflect part at least of the stream of wealth from the pockets of the Hudson's Bay shareholders into their own.

As the tide of American settlement rolled steadily west-

<sup>1</sup> Grant, *Ocean to Ocean*, p. 10.

ward, it became obvious that the exact position of the 49th parallel must be discovered, unless Great Britain was prepared to face again the inconveniences of joint control, such as those that had arisen on the Pacific. Again, unless the British claim to the vast region north of the 49th parallel was embodied in something stronger than the control by a trading company, it was plain that American frontiersmen would almost certainly ignore the imaginary line, and many Canadians believed that the only way to substantiate the British claim to this region was to establish settlements there. Otherwise, as in the former boundary disputes between Great Britain and the United States, Canada would be sure to lose. Several years later Grant remarked upon the comparative ignorance usually displayed by the British at such times, but while they were usually ignorant of the territory, the Americans could draw upon the reports of military officers and other experts, as well as upon a vast fund of unofficial information from hunters and missionaries. "The history of each treaty between the two Powers is the history of a contest between knowledge and ignorance from the first step in the negotiation to the last. The one Power always knew what it wanted. It therefore presented a firm and apparently consistent front. The other had only a dim notion that right was on its side; and a notion, equally dim, that the object in dispute was not worth contending for."<sup>1</sup>

This is not the place to discuss the correctness or otherwise of this opinion, but whether it was true or not, it was undoubtedly held by many Canadians and coloured their attitude to the question of the Hudson's Bay territory. The desire to ensure that this land should remain British was by no means limited to Canadians. There were many in Great Britain equally apprehensive of the future, and equally opposed to allowing so vast a region to remain the private

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

preserve of a monopolistic company. Lord Carnarvon stressed the importance of providing adequate lines of communication with Canada in the east, and with New Caledonia in the west. He also demanded the establishment of more British settlements in the Hudson's Bay territory, no matter how small they might be, so long as they would confirm the British title to the undivided sovereignty of the territory on the northern side of the boundary line. "Above all, I would impress upon the government that the privileges of a trading company ought not to be allowed to stand in the way of imperial Colonization."<sup>1</sup> He like many others, did not accept the view that the existence of this trading monopoly was essential to the well-being of the natives, and indeed, he argued that the truth was quite the contrary, that the company had kept the natives in child-like dependence not only for luxuries, but for powder, shot, food and clothing. He demanded therefore, that the more southerly and valuable parts of the Hudson's Bay territory should be thrown open to settlement and should no longer be set apart for the exclusive use of the fur trade.

The idea of establishing an all-British route across North America had long been in the minds of British statesmen. In 1845 Warre and Vavasour were sent out to report on the feasibility of such a scheme, and various people, both in Canada and in Great Britain, had put forward suggestions as to the sort of route desired, and its general direction. The discovery of gold in the Caribou in the 'fifties, drew the eyes of the world on the distant British Pacific Province of New Caledonia. Once more the idea of an overland route was discussed and it was believed both in Canada and the United States that the Saskatchewan could be made use of for purposes of navigation.

Thus the old company, which had so successfully come

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, vol. cliv., July 14, 1859, p. 1192.

through its struggle with its rival in the earlier part of the century, and had managed to maintain its monopoly so long, was now called upon to meet new and fierce criticism both in Great Britain and in Canada. After the union with the North-West Company in 1821 it obtained a renewal of its exclusive right to the fur trade from Lake Superior to the Pacific. In 1838 this renewal was extended for another twenty-one years, but not without opposition. Normally therefore, the charter would come up for reconsideration in 1859, but before this occurred the affairs of the Hudson's Bay Company became the subject of exhaustive examination by a Parliamentary Committee.

On February 5, 1857, Labouchere, Secretary of State for the Colonies, moved for the appointment of a committee to report on the affairs of the Hudson's Bay Company. He paid a glowing tribute to Sir George Simpson, praised the sagacity of the company's officials and declared that its rule had been beneficial to the Indian population.<sup>1</sup> The committee was a very strong one, including Lord Stanley, Lord John Russell, Gladstone, Roebuck and Ellice, with Labouchere as chairman. It went thoroughly into the Company's affairs, but the fruits of its labours were not such as might have been expected from this talented group. Mr. Gladstone suggested that the country capable of colonisation should be withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the Hudson's Bay Company, whose rights henceforward should be based on statute, but this proposal was defeated by the casting vote of the chairman.

The evidence of Sir George Simpson, which fills sixty-five pages of the report, makes interesting, if not indeed amusing reading to those acquainted with the Canadian Prairie Province of to-day. According to him, the country was quite unsuited for settlement; in many parts of it the ground was

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, vol. cxliv. pp. 219 ff.

frozen the whole year round, and it was only necessary to dig a foot or so below the surface in order to reach the frozen earth. In general it was a region liable to be smitten by some at least of the plagues of Egypt. Locusts came and devoured every green thing, and from time to time portentous floods occurred. He himself had paddled over the roofs of houses at Red River. Speaking of what is now Southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, he said: "Along the banks of the river I have no question that a settlement might be self-supporting; a population thinly scattered along the banks of the river might support themselves, but a dense population could not live in that country; the country would not afford the means of subsistence . . . It could not support a large population, and, moreover, there is no fuel; the fuel of the country would be exhausted in the course of a very few years."<sup>1</sup>

Ross, the former Attorney-General of Canada, did not think that the Company should be allowed to prevent settlement, but believed that it would be a very great calamity to the Territory if the Company's control was to cease. He went on to say that there had been peace in the Hudson's Bay territory for many years, during which south of the line from Oregon to Florida there had been constant Indian wars, and he thought that the removal of the company's authority would lead to a similar condition in British territory. Ross agreed with Gladstone that piecemeal additions to Canada as communications were established with the outside world, would be preferable to complete and immediate surrender. Chief Justice Draper, while supporting the Canadian desire for western expansion, spoke of the demoralising effect upon the Indians resulting from the sale of intoxicating liquors by free traders. He acknowledged

<sup>1</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company, 1857, p. 77.*



that, while many Canadians were interested in this subject on general patriotic grounds, a good deal of the opposition to the Company undoubtedly arose from trade jealousy.

The final report of the Committee, as Egerton says, was a colourless document. It stated that it was essential to meet the just and reasonable wishes of Canada, to annex such portions of the north-west in her neighbourhood as might be suitable for settlement. If Canada was unwilling to undertake the government of the Red River settlement, some temporary constitution should be set up for the purpose. All land not suitable for settlement should continue for the present under the control of the Company and remain an enclosed preserve for its trade. Indeed, the only useful purpose that the Committee served was to make this remote portion of the Empire a little more known than it had been, and to adduce the knowledge that some, at least, of that vast territory was well adapted for settlement and development.

While the Committee was still at work, Labouchere issued instructions for the exploration of the southern part of the Hudson's Bay territory. The expedition was placed under the command of Captain Palliser, who had already done some hunting among the Indians of the western states, with Dr. Hector as his second in command. For the purposes of the present work the party under Palliser's command was instructed to take "such a course as you shall consider most advisable for acquiring additional knowledge of the country on either side of the Bow River". Having explored what is now Southern Saskatchewan in 1857, the expedition was to investigate in the following year the district between the north Saskatchewan and the boundary line. Thereafter it was to proceed westward to the headwaters of the Saskatchewan and discover, if possible, passes across the mountains in British territory suitable for horses. In the same year another expedition was despatched by the Canadian

Government under Henry Y. Hind, with instructions to explore the country from Lake Superior to the Saskatchewan as far west as South Branch House. As he was never further west than the Elbow, from which point he floated down to the Forks, his expedition had little or nothing to do with Alberta. The two parties worked completely independently, and Palliser nowhere makes any mention of the exploration which he must have known was being conducted to the eastward.

At the end of August 1857, Palliser arrived at the Elbow of the South Saskatchewan and proceeded thence up-stream on its south side. It was his intention to reach the mouth of the Red Deer River, but when this became known to his party he was faced with what amounted to a mutiny. There happened to be a war going on between the Crees and the Blackfeet, and none of Palliser's half-breeds or Indians were particularly anxious to lose their scalps. He was finally obliged to drop his plans, and so on September 27 he crossed the Saskatchewan and struck across country to Fort Carlton, where his party was to winter.

In May of the following year the expedition was once more at the Elbow of the South Saskatchewan. This time however, no serious objection was raised when Palliser determined to start out for the Red Deer River. They crossed this stream several miles below the site of the present town of that name, at a place where Irricana now is. Palliser divided his party; with one or two companions he went directly south while the rest of his men under Hector proceeded up the Bow River. Palliser finally arrived in sight of Chief Mountain and discovered his position to be latitude  $49^{\circ} 05'$ . Turning north again, he followed a more westerly route to Old Bow Fort, and on August 14 he arrived at the Bow near the mouth of the Kananaskis. Four miles above the fort he crossed the Bow and found his men in camp but

with provisions running very low, and in great fear of the Blackfeet. Palliser then pushed up the Pass to a point at which he found two streams close together running in different directions. "While our tea-pail was filled with Pacific water, our scanty supper of tough elk-meat was boiled in the water of the Saskatchewan." Having gone down as far as the Kootenay River, Palliser returned across the mountains and struck eastward to Highwood River, after which he set out for his winter quarters at Edmonton.

In the meantime Hector, according to instructions, had followed up the Bow River to Old Bow Fort. He crossed the mountains by the Vermilion Pass and followed them on the western slope to the Kicking Horse River. He then proceeded up this river eastward and returned over the mountains by the Pass of that name. Unless, as Palliser suggests, Thompson had crossed this way on one of his many journeys, Hector was the first white man to use this route which was later to become so famous. Travelling down from the summit, Hector followed a stream which his Stony Indian guides long before their leader recognised as the Bow River. Hector went through the Bow Pass and finally reached the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan, which he followed down to Rocky Mountain House and Edmonton.

During the following winter, 1858-59, Palliser spent some time with the Blackfeet in the neighbourhood of Rocky Mountain House under the pretence of hunting, but really to win their confidence in order to facilitate further work. His explorations in 1859 were mainly from longitude  $109^{\circ}$  to  $113^{\circ}$ , west along the 49th parallel and north to the south Saskatchewan. With some difficulty he got his party together, for 1859 was to carry him far out into the Blackfoot country, and no one was eager for such a dangerous enterprise. Finally, on May 26, 1859, he left Edmonton with a motley company for the south. Travelling via the Hand Hills,

where he had some difficulty with the Blackfeet, he once more reached the Red Deer River. This time however, he followed it down past the ruins of Chesterfield House to its confluence with the South Saskatchewan. He then crossed this latter stream and made for the Cypress Hills, but as his guides were unwilling to visit that particular haunt of the Blackfeet, he was led too far to the west. When he discovered this mistake, he struck directly eastward until he reached the Hills.

While there Palliser sent a man down to locate the 49th parallel and then prepared for his final work. He divided his party once more and ordered Hector to proceed up the Bow River to the mountains. Hector struck the South Saskatchewan, followed it up to the mouth of the Belly, crossed that stream and struck across country to the Highwood River. There he visited a Stony encampment and continued up the Bow to the mouth of the Swift Water Creek, now known as the Elbow River. Having followed up this stream for a few miles he struck across to the Bow River above Old Bow Fort, after which he set out for the mountains. Palliser in the meantime, left the Cypress Hills and crossed the Belly River about forty miles above the place where Hector had crossed. Thence going westward, he reached the Porcupine Hills, and by August 12 was in the mountains once more. He crossed over by the British Kootenay Pass, now called Blakiston Pass, a well-known route for Indian war and hunting parties. Palliser arrived at Colville on the Columbia on September 5, where he was rejoined by Hector on October 23.

When the Hudson's Bay Company's licence to exclusive trade expired in 1859, the Imperial Government refused to renew it for New Caledonia, or British Columbia, as that colony was henceforward to be known. At the same time however, it offered to renew the trade monopoly in the

country east of the Rocky Mountains for another twenty-one years, and also to refer the vexed question of territorial rights to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council; but as the Secretary of State for the Colonies announced that the Imperial Government would not allow the legal validity of the Company's charter to be called into question during the proposed proceedings, the Canadian Government decided not to take action. In a joint address presented by both Houses of the Canadian Parliament to the Crown in the previous August, the Canadian point of view had been clearly set forth. Canada's rights were deeply affected by the Hudson's Bay Company's charter, a document the validity of which had been questioned for upwards of a century. The address asked for a decision on the subject of Hudson's Bay rights, which were prejudicial to the interests of both Great Britain and Canada as long as they remained undecided, since they rendered colonisation and settlement impossible.

Throughout the 'sixties, the future of the Hudson's Bay territories continued to engage the attention both of Canadian and British statesmen. When in 1863 the International Financial Association carried out the reconstruction of the company, public attention was once more focused on its affairs. The remodelled company appears to have enjoyed even less confidence among Canadians than its predecessor, and the question of its right to Rupert's Land and the boundary between that territory and Canada continued to be an important one in colonial politics. In his speech from the Throne in February 1864, the Governor of Canada drew attention to this subject which, he stated, he had recently taken up with the Imperial Government.<sup>1</sup>

Canadian antagonism to the Company was further intensified by the belief that its shadowy control was in itself

<sup>1</sup> Begg, *History of the North-West*, vol. i. p. 336.

dangerous. This took expression in the widespread fear that there was nothing to hinder the United States from acquiring the great hinterland between the Red River and the Rocky Mountains, and there is sufficient evidence to show that these fears were not groundless. On July 2, 1866, for example, General Banks introduced a Bill into the House of Representatives, providing for the admission of the Canadian Provinces to the Union and for the organisation of the Territories of Selkirk, Saskatchewan and Columbia. Again, the Minnesota Legislature on March 6, 1868, sent the following memorial to the President: "We regret to be informed of a purpose to transfer the territories between Alaska and Minnesota to the Dominion of Canada by an order in council at London, without a vote of the people of Selkirk and the settlers upon the sources of the Saskatchewan River, who largely consist of emigrants from the United States; and we would respectfully urge that the President and Congress of the United States shall represent to the Government of Great Britain that such action will be an unwarrantable interference with the principle of self-government, and cannot be regarded with indifference by the people of the United States."<sup>1</sup>

~~As early as 1865~~ it is clear that Sir John A. Macdonald was fully alive to this danger. "If Canada is to remain a country separate from the United States, it is of great importance to her that they (the United States) should not get behind us by right or force and intercept the route to the Pacific."<sup>2</sup> In 1870 he was still apprehensive about American intentions. "It is quite evident to me . . . that the United States Government are resolved to do all they can, short of war, to get possession of the western territory, and we must

<sup>1</sup> *Dalhousie Review*, vol. ix. No. 3, October 1929. MacRae, "When Annexation was in Flower", p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Pope, *Life of Sir John A. Macdonald*, ii. p. 43.

take immediate and vigorous steps to counteract them. One of the first things to be done is to show unmistakably our resolve to build the Pacific Railway."<sup>1</sup>

In the negotiations which preceded confederation, the future of the Hudson's Bay Territories was not forgotten by the architects of the New Dominion. Section 146 of the British North America Act of 1867 provided for the transfer of the Territories to Canada. "It shall be lawful for the Queen . . . on Address from the Houses of the Parliament of Canada to admit Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory, or either of them, into the Union, on such terms and conditions in each case as are in the Addresses expressed and as the Queen thinks fit to approve, subject to the provisions of this Act." In December 1867, during the first session of the Dominion Parliament, the Honourable W. MacDougall, Minister of Works, introduced a series of resolutions upon which the address provided for by the British North America Act might be based. The resolutions passed and the Address was presented to the Crown, but owing to the fact that the Canadian Parliament reverted to the position taken up by the Canadian statesmen in the 'fifties and early 'sixties, difficulties at once arose. Although it had been agreed since then to negotiate on a basis of the validity of the Company's Charter, the Canadian Parliament now laid claim to Rupert's Land by virtue of the cession by France of her territories to Great Britain in 1763. At that time there were French traders both on the Red River and the Saskatchewan, and no Hudson's Bay post had yet been erected in the hinterland. Indeed, it was only after the vigorous policy of the Montreal traders had threatened its existence, that the Hudson's Bay Company had departed from its century-old policy of waiting on the Bay for the Indians to come down with their furs. Looked at in this way, the Dominion's claim had much to

<sup>1</sup> Pope, *ibid.* ii. p. 162.

commend it. Still, the undisputed right to the territory since 1822 at the very latest, as well as the fact that in the eighteenth century the western boundary of Canada had been considered to be the Mississippi and the line drawn northward from its source, went far to vitiate it.

In a dispatch to the Canadian Government, the Colonial Secretary summed up the position of the British Government thus: "The Company have held their Charter, and exercised their privileges conferred by it, for two hundred years, including rights of government and legislation, together with the property of all the lands and precious metals; and various eminent law officers, consulted in succession, have all declared that the validity of this Charter cannot be justly disputed by the Crown."<sup>1</sup> The Company therefore, supported by the British Government, refused to entertain the claims put forward in the Address, and as the acquisition of the Territories was vital to Canada, the Dominion was obliged to negotiate on the basis of the company's legal rights.

In July 1868 a special Act was passed by the British Parliament to supplement the provisions of the British North America Act referring to the transfer of the Hudson's Bay Territories to the Dominion.<sup>2</sup> Section three provided for their surrender to the Crown "upon such Terms and Conditions as shall be agreed upon by and between Her Majesty and the said Governor and Company". An amendment however, laid it down that "no charge shall be imposed by such Terms upon the Consolidated Fund of the United Kingdom". Thus, the Imperial Government departed from the policy it had previously pursued when it purchased the Company's rights to Vancouver Island. This measure empowered the Crown to accept the surrender of these Territories and enabled the

<sup>1</sup> *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. i. No. 4, December 1920, Chester Marten, "The First 'New Province' of the Dominion", p. 358.

<sup>2</sup> 31 and 32 Vic. Cap. 105, July 31, 1868. *British Hansard*, vol. 193, p. 1248.



Company to make that surrender. Throughout the negotiations, Canada took the position that she was dealing with the Imperial Government alone, that the lands came to her from that Power and not from the Company, and that the money paid by her was not purchase money but the "cost of legal proceedings necessary, if any be necessary to recover possession. . . . Compromises of this kind are not unknown in private life, and the motives and calculations which govern them may be applicable to the present case."<sup>1</sup> The Act also provided that before the Territories were handed over to the Dominion the Canadian Parliament should first embody the terms of the agreement in an Address, after which the British Government, by Order-in-Council, would sanction the transfer.

On March 19, 1869, the terms of surrender were settled and on April 13, Mr. Maunsell announced in the British House of Commons that the Company had consented to surrender all its rights and privileges, on condition that it received in return £300,000 in money, together with some fifty thousand acres in the vicinity of its posts and one-twentieth of all lands that might be laid out for settlement in the next fifty years. This agreement was duly ratified the 19th of the following November, but this did not end the question.

The Riel Rebellion broke out in 1869, and Sir John MacDonald was resolved that Canada should not assume responsibility for the government of the Territories, until they could be handed over in good order. He therefore advised MacDougall, who was to be the Canadian representative, not to be too precipitate in proclaiming his mission, and to wait until the Rebellion had been crushed before assuming control. Thus it was not until May 1870, when the Rebellion was over, that the Dominion of Canada duly paid the

<sup>1</sup> Cartier and McDougall to Colonial Office, February 8, 1869, quoted in *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. i. No. 4, December 1920. Chester Marten, "The First 'New Province' of the Dominion", p. 359.

£300,000, and the sway of the Hudson's Bay Company in the vast North-West was definitely terminated.

It is unnecessary here to go into the terms of the surrender, but it is impossible not to observe that, whatever had been the services of the company to the Empire, they were more than paid for by the generous terms it received. Fortunately for Canada, it was assumed at the time that the Fertile Belt lay between the North Saskatchewan and the 49th parallel; otherwise there might have been an even more reckless forfeiture of Canadian lands to this company, whose greatest claim to consideration appears to have been its longevity. It surrendered at a good price land that it had never valued, save for its pemmican, and some of which it had never even attempted to control. It retained all its posts, all its trading rights, though without the monopoly, and thanks to the fact that it was already established, it was able to develop its general business with great profit to itself as population flowed into the Territories after 1870. Indeed, as it was relieved of onerous judicial, legislative and administrative duties, presented with a large sum of money and a vast amount of valuable land, the surrender of Rupert's Land, from the Company's point of view, was an unqualified blessing.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WILD WEST

BETWEEN the heyday of the Company's rule under Sir George Simpson and the coming of the Mounted Police, an interregnum occurred during which the country was almost completely lawless. Whatever the defects of its government were, the Company never allowed a condition of affairs to develop similar to that which prevailed for years on the American frontier. While the good order and absence of crime were partially due to the policy of discouraging immigration, it is also a fact that Hudson's Bay officials conducted their trade with the Indians on the basis of justice and honourable dealing. The result was that when the Territories passed to the Dominion, the Company was able to say that it was at peace with the Indians; and for years past to be known as a Hudson's Bay man was regarded by the natives of the west, with the exception of course of the Southern Alberta Indians, as a mark of distinction.

But while this is so, the last decade of Company rule witnessed a marked diminution in its authority. Indians and half-breeds heard distorted stories of the Company's financial difficulties at home and of alleged proposals which were said to have been made for the disposal of the Territories. These people dreaded the inclusion of the North-West in the American Union, and to a lesser extent the transfer of the country to any authority other than the Company they knew. Free traders, as all private traders were called, whose

numbers steadily increased in the 'sixties, were naturally no friends of the former lords of the West. In various ways they weakened the Company's authority and destroyed respect for it among the Indians and half-breeds. Alcohol was freely sold by them, although everyone knew that this was contrary to the Company's policy. They played upon the inflammable imaginations of these people, told them that they had been badly treated in the past and that they must expect worse to come in the future.

In addition to their imaginary wrongs, the Indians had a number of special grievances which were only too real and which they were prepared to attribute to the Hudson's Bay Company, to the Dominion Government, or to the free traders. To begin with, they were one and all opposed to white settlement on a large scale. Unreasonable as the claim may appear in view of their small numbers, they felt that the country was theirs. They knew what had happened in the United States, how their kinsmen had been dispossessed and driven ever further to the west until they could go no further. They had heard stories of the white man's injustice, his brutality and his unquenchable hatred of the red man, and naturally they did not wish to see a repetition of these things in their own land. Many of them knew that certain Americans had openly avowed the policy of exterminating the Indians, and facts were not wanting to confirm their belief that these individuals represented the will of the American people generally.

Again, like all primitive peoples, the Indians found it impossible to understand the white man's theory of private property in land. They knew that certain territories belonged to a particular tribe or group of tribes, but the idea of private individual proprietorship of land was utterly beyond their comprehension. Paper documents might be piled as high as Chief Mountain, but that would not change the fact

that one part of the country belonged to the Crees, another to the Blackfeet and another to the Piegan. It was the old problem, which has arisen so many times in history, in New Zealand, in Ireland, in the United States, where tribal right and tradition are arrayed against clear-cut legal conceptions of private property. Thus, while they recognised that there was a vast difference between the white men who represented the Hudson's Bay Company and the "long knives", still white settlers, whether British or American, were a potential menace and equally open to suspicion.

Then again, the Indians attributed the loss of many dogs and horses to the half-breeds' practice of using poison to kill wolves. Thus a feeling of enmity began to grow up which, when the wild unstable nature of the people in question is borne in mind, augured very ill for the future. The half-breeds themselves were growing restive by 1870 under the prevailing uncertainty.

Bad however, as conditions were during the last decade of the Hudson's Bay Company's rule, they grew worse after the transfer of the Territories to Canada. Free traders were not all bad men; there were for example, such people as the McDougalls of Morleyville, who were primarily missionaries and traded merely in order to subsist. The influence of such people upon the Indians was wholly beneficent, but unfortunately this devoted family of earnest Christian teachers stood in a class apart. There were however, a few relatively respectable traders from Montana who traded with the Indians in rifles and blankets and other useful articles. But these again were few and far between, and liable at any moment to lapse into the whisky trader pure and simple. The men of this latter class were enemies to law and order, whether American, or Canadian. They interpreted the end of Company's rule to mean the beginning of a period of anarchy, in which might was right and justice the will of

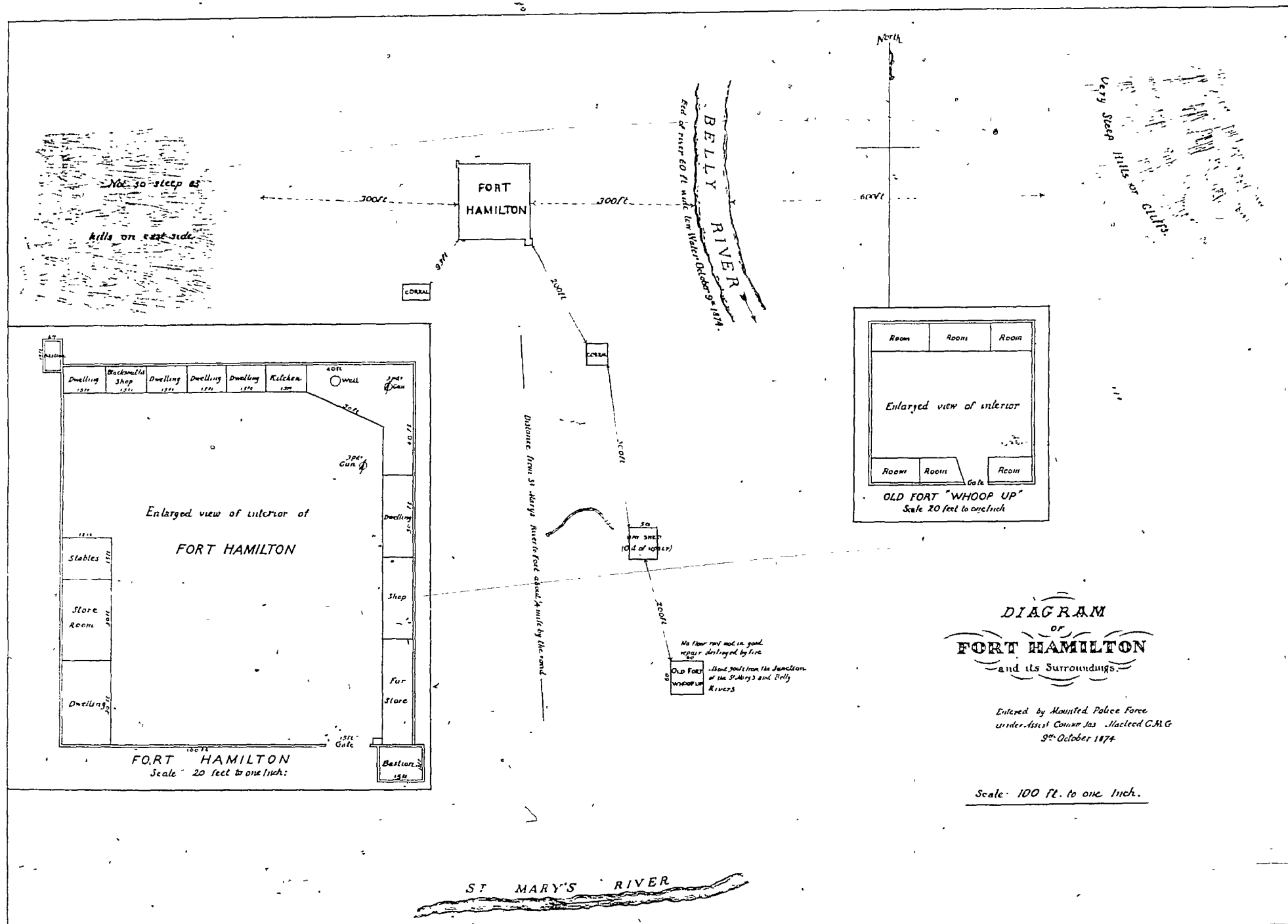
the strong. They appeared with the first American traders in Southern Alberta about 1866, and for the next eight years or so they dominated the country, recognised no law but their own will and debauched the unfortunate Indians. Their chief post in Canadian territory was Fort Whoop-up, built by Healy and Hamilton of Benton, Montana, and situated at the junction of the Belly and St. Mary's Rivers.

Various explanations of the name "Whoop-up" have been given. According to one authority, it was a term used on the Missouri, meaning rounded up by the Indians. It is said that when the first expedition set out for Southern Alberta from Fort Benton, I. G. Baker, who had fitted it out, shouted to the departing traders, "Do not let the Indians whoop you up".<sup>1</sup> According to another writer, those who built the post were instructed, when they left Fort Benton, to "whoop-up" (develop quickly) the trade with the Indians.<sup>2</sup> There is another tradition that such a thriving trade in whisky with the Indians was carried on at the new post, that a special messenger had to be sent to Fort Benton for more supplies of whisky, as they were "whooping-up" the trade with the Indians.<sup>3</sup> But whatever the exact meaning of the term may be, there can be no doubt about the nature of the place—it was the centre of demoralization and crime.

Steele, who visited this post in 1874, thus describes it. "One of the principal posts of the traders in that region was Fort Hamilton, commonly known as Whoop-up. . . . There were two walls (about a rectangular enclosure) about a dozen feet apart built of heavy squared logs, braced across by heavy log partitions about the same distance from one another, divided into rooms, which were used as dwellings, blacksmiths' shops, stores, etc., the doors and windows opening into the square. There were bastions at the corners, and the walls

<sup>1</sup> Pearce MS. chap. xii. p. 177.      <sup>2</sup> Longstreth, *The Silent Force*, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Denny, *The Riders of the Plains*, p. 2.







were loopholed for musketry. Iron bars were placed across the chimneys to prevent the Indians getting in that way. There were heavy log roofs across the partitions and a strong gate of oak, with a small opening through which to trade.<sup>1</sup>

Other posts were built at Slide-Out, named so because some traders who were attacked by Indians, escaped or "slid out" by night. This post was on the north-west bank of the Belly above Fort Whoop-up. Another post was Stand-Off, where some traders who were pursued by an American sheriff stood him and his party off, *i.e.* held them at bay, as soon as Canadian territory was reached.<sup>2</sup> Next to Whoop-Up however, the most notorious post of the time was Fort Kipp, named after one of the traders, and there were in addition other smaller posts, such as Spitzee on Spitzee or Highwood River.

The term "fort" was applied to any sort of building occupied by a trader. It might be merely a log shack, but more usually these places were strongly built and surrounded by a high palisade. The one on Elbow River for example, near the site of the present city of Calgary, an outpost of Healy and Hamilton of Whoop-up, was of this latter type. It consisted of three rooms, a living-room, a store and trading-room, with a passage running in front of the latter into which the Indians were admitted to trade one at a time. Whoop-up rejoiced in the possession of a cannon which however, the Mounted Police officers considered would have been more dangerous to the defenders than to the attackers. But whatever the defects of their artillery may have been, these posts could easily be held by a handful of men against surprise Indian attacks.

The men in charge were as wild a set as the Wild West has seen. Many of them had served in the American Civil

<sup>1</sup> Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Pearce MS. chap. xii. p. 177.

War, and practically all of them had some experience of Indian wars in the United States, so that they were perfectly capable of taking care of themselves. As trading alcohol with the Indians was against American law, these traders were enemies to all authority. Fort Benton, the nearest American town, was at this time a turbulent place where, as one of its prominent citizens observed, "religion and education were at a low ebb". As late as 1882, when Mr. F. W. Godsall passed through this place, he was given the significant advice "keep to the middle of the street and mind your own business; this is a tough town".<sup>1</sup> Everybody went armed there, and the Vigilantes as they were called, occasionally "cleaned the town up." This then, was civilisation, and it can be well imagined that the representatives of Fort Benton who found themselves on the Canadian side of the line, where there was not even a pretence of law, should take full advantage of their opportunity. Supplies were carried by waggon from Benton. Once on the open prairie the traders were comparatively safe, for they could rarely be discovered by the American authorities. Still the trip was made as quickly as possible, and sometimes they were overtaken by American officers, and small skirmishes were comparatively frequent.

Even more disreputable than the whisky traders were the wolfers. These men made their living by hunting the wolves that preyed upon the herds of bison. Their favourite method was to run a buffalo down, cut it open, throw in a dose of strychnine or arsenic, which the blood of the dying animal would carry to all parts of the body. Thus the wolves who devoured the carcass were killed, and it was believed that this was the only way in which they could be poisoned. Wolfers and whisky traders were far from friendly with each other. Apparently the traders considered themselves socially

<sup>1</sup> Godsall, F. W., *Old Times*, p. 1.

a cut or two superior to these poor parasites. The wolfers on their part, strongly objected to the introduction of the repeating rifle among the Indians, as this increased the slaughter of buffalo and thus lessened the chances of wolves devouring poisoned carcasses.

The headquarters of the wolfers was on Highwood River. As the traders persisted in furnishing up-to-date rifles to the Indians, the wolfers determined to end this practice forthwith. They formed themselves into an organisation, styled "The Spitzee Cavalry", whose function was to enforce the regulations of the wolfers. Among other things it was laid down that for the future no cartridges, up-to-date breech-loaders or magazine rifles should be supplied to the Indians. A party of twenty-five wolfers started on a round of the trading posts to see that this order was obeyed, and their first call was on Hamilton of Whoop-up. Owing to the suddenness of their appearance they entered that place before he knew of their approach. He was informed of their mission and told, with many oaths, that if need be, they were prepared to enforce their regulations by arms. Hamilton listened to them very carefully, abstractedly poking the fire the while, and he absent-mindedly left the poker in the coals. When it was red-hot he took it out and still talking very earnestly to his visitors, crossed the room with the poker in his hand. With a swift movement he pulled the buffalo covering from a barrel of gunpowder, and holding the poker over it told his guests to clear out or they would all go to hell together. Needless to say, the wolfers made a rush for the gate, and Hamilton shouted after them that if they returned they would be dead men. Thus ended the career of the extremely ambitious, but singularly ineffective Spitzee Cavalry.

Traders and wolfers alike were always ready with the gun, too ready in fact, for comfort. Kamoose Taylor for example, while telling his friends of a recent adventure shot off his

gun, but unfortunately, hit a keg of gunpowder, which blew out the wall of the fort and burnt it down. Indeed, human life was of little account among these men and friendships apt to be rather brittle. This is borne out by the letter which is said to be authentic, sent by a man at Whoop-up to his friend at Fort Benton.

DEAR FRIEND—My partner, Will Geary, got to putting on airs and I shot him and he is dead. The potatoes is looking well.—Yours truly,  
SNOOKUM JIM.<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of such people to the Indians was what might be expected. Indians were theirs to be cheated and robbed, their women ravished and their rights denied. At Fort Benton white men would swagger and bully the Indians as much as they chose, and no one would take the trouble to stop them, but let an Indian get out of hand, and then it would be "Bring out the troops, call in the settlers . . . down with the Injuns, wipe them out root and branch".<sup>2</sup>

Butler quotes the description given to him by a participant in a massacre of some Indians, which well illustrates the point of view of many American frontiersmen, and of their brethren the whisky traders and wolfers. "It was a little afore day when the boys came upon two redskins in a gulch near away to the 'Sun River. They caught the darned red devils and strapped them on a hoss, and swore that if they didn't jist lead the way to their camp, that they'd blow their b—— brains out; and Jim Baker wasn't the coon to go under if he said he'd do it—no, you bet he wasn't. So the red devils showed the trail, and soon the boys came out on a wide gulch, and saw down below the lodges of the 'Pagans'. Baker jist says, 'Now, boys', says he, 'thar's the devils and jist ye go in and clear them out. No darned prisoners, you know; Uncle Sam ain't a-goin' to keep prisoners, I

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Longstreth, *The Silent Force*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> McDougall, *On Western Trails in the Early 'Seventies*, p. 145.

guess. No darned squaws or young 'uns, but jist kill 'em all, squaws and all; it's them squaws what breeds 'em, and them young 'uns will only be horse-thieves or hair-lifters when they grows up; so jist make a clean shave of the hull brood.' Wall, mister, ye see, the boys jist rode in among the lodges afore daylight, and they killed everything that was able to come out of the tents, for, ye see, the redskins had the small-pox bad, they had, and a heâp of them couldn't come out nohow; so the boys jist turned over the lodges and fixed them as they lay on the ground. Thar was up to a hundred and seventy of them Pagans wiped out that mornin', and thar was only one of the boys sent under by a redskin firing out at him from inside a lodge. I say, mister, that Baker's a bell-ox among sodgers, you bet.'<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to compare this brutal account of a savage massacre by so-called civilised men, with the speech of the Piegan chief to Father Lacombe on this same affair about a month after the occurrence. The priest tried to point out to the Indians the uselessness of continuing the fight with the Americans—they had too much power and they were too many for the redskins. Though the Indian's speech probably owes something to Butler's pen, just as the account of his American informant did, still the spirit was there in both cases and the substance in both is probably authentic. "It is well, and listen now to what I say to you; but first, you, my brethren, you, my sons, who sit around me, if there should be aught in my words from which you differ, if I say one word that you would not say yourselves, stop me, and say to this black-robe I speak with a forked tongue. . . . You have spoken true, your words come straight; the Long-knives are too many and too strong for us; their guns shoot farther than ours, their big guns shoot twice" (alluding to shells); "their numbers are as the buffalo were in the days

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *The Great Lone Land*, pp. 268-9.

of our fathers. But what of all that? do you want us to starve on the land which is ours? to lie down as slaves to the white man, to die away one by one in misery and hunger? It is true, that the Long-knives must kill us, but I say still, to my children and to my tribe, 'Fight on! fight on!' go on fighting till the very last man; and let that last man go on fighting too, for it is better to die thus, as a brave man should die, than to live a little time and then die like a coward. So now, my brethren, I tell you, as I have told you before, keep fighting still. When you see these men coming along the river, digging holes in the ground, and looking for the little bright sand, kill them, for they mean to kill you; fight, and, if it must be, die, for you can only die once, and it is better to die than to starve . . . what does the white man want in our land? you tell us he is rich and strong and has plenty of food to eat; for what then, does he come to our land? We have only the buffalo, and he takes that from us. See the buffalo, how they dwell with us; they care not for the closeness of our lodges, the smoke of our camp-fires does not frighten them, the shouts of our young men will not drive them away; but behold how they flee from the sight, sound and the smell of the white man! Why does he take the land from us? who sent him here? he puts up sticks and he calls the land his land, the river his river, the trees his trees. Who gave him the ground and the water and the trees? was it the Great Spirit? No! for the Great Spirit gave to us the beasts and the fish, and the white man comes to take the waters and the ground where those fishes and these beasts live—why does he not take the sky as well as the ground? We who have dwelt on these prairies ever since the stars fell do not put sticks over the land and say, 'Between these sticks this land is mine; you shall not come here or go there.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *op.cit.*, pp. 270-72

On the Canadian side of the line where there was less pretence of law than in Montana, conditions were quite as bad as in the United States, if not worse. For example, in 1873, a band of American traders came over to the Cypress Hills, near where Fort Walsh was later to be established by the Mounted Police. There they traded whisky and other articles for buffalo robes. When all their supplies were gone, they determined to massacre the Indians and take back again as much of the goods they had traded as possible. They accused the Indians of horse stealing and then proceeded to murder them, which was a comparatively easy task, as the Indians were poorly armed with old-fashioned muzzle-loaders.

The Indians were so fond of whisky that they were prepared to exchange almost anything for it, buffalo robes, dogs, horses and even their women. Most of the traders had one, two, or three squaws whom they obtained in exchange for liquor. Denny mentions one whisky trader who declared that the squaw he then had was number fifty-seven.<sup>1</sup>

If, as was sometimes the case, the Indians were not prepared to make such a nefarious exchange, the traders usually got their way. Kamoose Taylor (*i.e.* woman-stealing Taylor) is a case in point. This man, who had been trained for the ministry and had forsaken his sacred calling for that of whisky trader, desired a certain young Indian woman as his squaw. Although he offered the usual one horse, two pairs of blankets and tobacco, the chief refused to give her up and so he crept into the Indian encampment disguised as a dog and stole her. Sometimes the traders exchanged whisky for horses, but this was a risky business, as the Indians usually tried to run the horses off after they had sobered up.

<sup>1</sup> Denny, *The Riders of the Plains*, p. 4.

When the Indians came to the posts, a small wicket in the gate was opened and the traders stood ready with a revolver on one side and a tub of alcohol, which had previously been diluted to three parts water and coloured with black tea or some dark herb, on the other. With the sophisticated Blackfeet however, the trader had to be careful, for they demanded "fire-water"—something that would light if you put a match to it. Twenty cupfuls of this liquid were the price of one head and tail buffalo robe, and three gallons were given for a good horse. Lieutenant-Governor Morris stated that in 1873 American traders exported fifty thousand dollars worth of buffalo robes and a hundred thousand dollars worth of other furs. As this estimate was based on known exports, it is certain that the total exports were very much greater.

When John McDougall visited Fort Kipp and Fort Whoop-up, he was horrified with the orgies that went on. McDougall found all the traders at Fort Kipp drunk, and heavily armed with weapons that they were prepared to use on the slightest excuse. Still, they did listen to the "sky-pilot" when he held a service after supper and they declared it to be the best show they had attended for years. Indeed they were so taken with "Parson John" that many of them decided to accompany him to Fort Whoop-up, much to his dismay. The scenes of drunkenness in this latter place were on a more elaborate scale than at Fort Kipp, but from his descriptions, while a good deal of promiscuous shooting seems to have gone on and much cursing and drinking, the traders do not seem to have been quite such a bad lot as McDougall painted them. He performed a marriage ceremony at Whoop-up which the traders found even more entertaining than the service which he had conducted at Kipp.<sup>1</sup> All the posts however, were not so badly conducted

<sup>1</sup> McDougall, *On Western Trails in the Early 'Seventies*, p 150.



as these two. The one on the Elbow River for example, kept by Mr. D. W. Davis, appears to have been a comparatively quiet and respectable place, where visitors found the man in charge to be courteous and hospitable.

Speaking generally, the influence of the American trader on the Canadian Indians was wholly bad. The introduction of the repeating rifle was a disaster to the red man. Armed with these weapons the hunting of the buffalo became a mere slaughter, and undoubtedly, one of the causes which helps to explain the extraordinary disappearance of this animal from the plains in the course of a few years, was the widespread use of such weapons by the Indians. In addition to this, they rendered Indian warfare more deadly and savage. It is clear from Thompson's account that before the appearance of Europeans, war among the Indians was relatively mild and casualties comparatively few. The acquisition of the horse and the gun in the eighteenth century, rendered it more savage and greatly extended the scope of war parties. But the repeating rifle added the last touch. Savages armed with these weapons attacked their traditional enemies, while the latter were still armed with bows and arrows or old-fashioned muzzle-loaders and wrought terrible havoc among them. The traders themselves learned by bitter experience that they had been far from wise in providing savages with these deadly repeaters. Indians who had lost almost everything in the iniquitous traffic for whisky, frequently attempted to recapture by force the goods which they had exchanged. The waggons that carried the season's yield of furs to Fort Benton offered the Indians too good an opportunity to be missed. Usually these attacks were beaten off with heavy losses, but the traders almost always suffered to some extent.

Unfortunately the Indians could not, or would not, distinguish between good and bad white men. They regarded

them all as hateful intruders to be robbed and scalped, and thus at least one peaceful party of emigrants suffered for the sins of the whisky traders. Had it not been for the fact that some Blackfeet turned up at Edmonton with gold which they offered in trade, this particular massacre might have passed unnoticed. The news that gold existed in the Blackfoot country attracted a good deal of attention at the time, but it turned out that this was only part of the spoils which the Indians had collected after they had murdered the whole party of whites. They had first lulled their victims by protestations of friendship and then murdered them in cold blood, at the very moment when their victims thought themselves perfectly safe. This gold, together with a fair-haired scalp carried by one of the braves and some charred remains of the immigrants' waggons, were the only traces left of this unhappy party. This case is only one of many such that probably occurred during the dismal years between 1866 and 1874.

But the worst evils of the whisky traffic consisted in the disastrous effects it had upon the Indians themselves. They forsook their old clean, wholesome life and became idlers about the forts. They hunted merely in order to obtain whisky and a little food, which the possession of a repeating rifle made comparatively easy. Their association with evil white men weakened their tribal organisation, undermined their physical stamina and did much to destroy many of their finer qualities. Crimes and outrages of every sort became the order of the day, from the north Saskatchewan south to the 49th parallel, and massacres were fairly common. Murderers moved about freely without question, and the only deterrent took the form of blood feuds, which still further helped to decimate the numbers of the natives. Sometimes in their drunken frenzy these unhappy savages turned their guns and knives upon each other. In 1871, for

example, eighty-eight Blackfeet were murdered in carousals, which were made possible by whisky obtained from free traders at Edmonton. When the Hudson's Bay officer in charge at that place expostulated with these men for their wicked disregard of law, they replied that they knew very well that what they were doing was contrary to the laws of both Canada and the United States, but as there was no force there to prevent them, they would do just as they pleased.<sup>1</sup> On another occasion a pitched battle took place between Crees and Blackfeet at the very gates of Fort Edmonton, and while it raged those in the fort stood ready with their guns behind the palisades to withstand attack in case the victors might turn out to be truculent. About the same time a half-breed who had slain several persons moved about Fort Edmonton without let or hindrance. Still another worthy had murdered his wife and mutilated another woman by cutting her sinews, and had made peace with his wife's family by the payment of two horses to her brothers.

When a band of Indians succeeded in procuring a quantity of liquor, it was customary to consume it all in one wild orgy, and the whole camp would remain intoxicated as long as it lasted. These carousals usually led to quarrels, resulting in severe wounds and murder. Sometimes the poor wretches were frozen to death in their drunken stupor, while others escaped the rigours of the climate only to die of alcoholic poisoning. "They sold their robes and horses by the hundred for liquor, and then began killing one another, so that in a short time they were divided into small parties afraid to meet."<sup>2</sup> These Indians, once the proudest, the most independent and the richest in the North-West, now found

<sup>1</sup> Report of Colonel Robertson-Ross, quoted in Haydon, *Riders of the Plains*, pp. 12-16.

<sup>2</sup> McDougall, *On Western Trails in the Early 'Seventies*, p. 129.

themselves with insufficient food, clothed in rags, and thanks to their unquenchable thirst for fire-water, rapidly ceasing to possess either guns or horses.

As if the cup of the Indians' misery was not already full to overflowing, another calamity, as deadly in its way as whisky, descended upon these unhappy people about 1870. Smallpox first visited the Blackfeet about 1780, and during the next ninety years recurred from time to time. The epidemic of 1870-71 however, was worse than any previously known, and it has been estimated that it swept off about one-third of the Plains Indians. The Sarsi, who were said to have numbered several thousands before the epidemic, could only muster a scant three or four hundred when the Mounted Police came.

Maddened by disease and sorrow, the Indians crowded round the trading posts in the vain hope of assuaging their sufferings by whisky. Quite naturally they blamed the white traders for this terrible scourge. They heard that two Americans had died of smallpox on the Missouri, and a story circulated among them that the blankets and other effects of these men had been given in trade to the Indians. False as these stories no doubt were, for smallpox had appeared among the Blackfeet long before any American trader was to be found on the Missouri, the effect was the same. In their last agony the Indians did their best to spread the disease among their white tormentors. They tore the scabs from their bodies and rubbed their sores on door handles and gates, so that those who passed that way would be sure to be affected. They exposed festering corpses to the windward of the posts, so that the air might be polluted and the white traders destroyed. When they could get whisky they tried to cure themselves by drinking vast quantities of boiling spirits so as to produce a sweat. Then as in the past, after their sweat baths, they plunged into cold water, some-

times in the very dead of winter, even breaking the ice in order to do so.<sup>1</sup>

This then, was the condition of Southern Alberta between 1870 and 1874, a condition which grew steadily worse during these years. "The Lord High Chancellor of England", wrote Butler, "together with the Master of the Rolls and the twenty-four judges of different degrees, would be perfectly useless if placed in the Saskatchewan to put in effect the authority of the law. The Crees, Blackfeet, Piegins and Sirces would doubtless have come to the conclusion that these high judicial functionaries were very great 'medicines'; but beyond that conclusion, which they would draw more from the remarkable costume and headgear worn by these exponents of the law than from the possession of any legal acumen, much would not have been attained."<sup>2</sup> The same writer stated, in his report to the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, that the institutions of law and order, as understood in civilised countries, were totally absent in the Saskatchewan region; there was no government, no authority of any kind that commanded general respect, crime was rampant and increasing. In his opinion the main reason why there had not been more crime in the past was largely due to the sparse and scattered nature of the population. When two years later, Colonel Robertson-Ross travelled through the North-West on behalf of the Dominion Government, he found that conditions were similar though growing steadily worse.

It became plain in 1872 and 1873 that, unless something was done very soon, the whisky traders would extend their operations until they covered a large section of the British North-West. Entering Canada at first in the Belly River section for only some forty or fifty miles, they rapidly extended their sphere of influence. Their posts were pushed

<sup>1</sup> Denny, *The Riders of the Plains*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Butler, *The Great Lone Land*, pp. 259-60.

further and further north until they reached the Elbow River, and their appearance in the Cypress Hills showed that they were extending their business to the eastward as well.

The free traders who were already in the country naturally looked to the United States for their supplies, since the Hudson's Bay Company dominated such transport as did exist from the east. When Butler was at Edmonton in 1870, he states that for the first time in the history of the Saskatchewan carts had passed safely from Edmonton to Benton during the previous summer. These carts, ten in number, left Edmonton in the month of May, loaded with furs and buffalo robes for the Missouri. They returned in June carrying a cargo chiefly of flour and alcohol.<sup>1</sup> Thus, left to themselves, the American whisky traders and their allies would probably have deflected the trade of the North Saskatchewan as well as that of the Bow and its tributaries to the United States. In his report Butler made certain recommendations designed to terminate the lawlessness of the Far West, recommendations in which the idea of a mounted police force was definitely adumbrated. He suggested the appointment of a civil commissioner similar to those in India and Ireland, who would make semi-annual tours through the territories and reside on the Upper Saskatchewan. This man he thought, should be assisted by civil magistrates appointed from among the Hudson's Bay officials and other inhabitants of the country. Further, he recommended the organisation of a well-equipped force of a hundred to a hundred and fifty men, one-third of whom should be mounted. This force should be specially recruited and each man specifically engaged for service in the Saskatchewan region. They should be enlisted for two or three years' service, on the expiry of which they should be encouraged to settle in the country by

<sup>1</sup> Butler's Report, quoted in *The Great Lone Land*, p. 380.

being given free grants of land, while settlers should constitute a reserve force which could be called upon if required.

Colonel Robertson-Ross made similar recommendations in his Report to the Dominion Government about two years later. He believed that a corps of mounted riflemen would be necessary to curb the Blackfeet and keep order in the country. "An easy and agreeable march of a few weeks' duration would", he declared, "suffice to establish them in the respective posts of occupation." Those who participated in the great overland trek of 1874 would have found this statement an excellent ground for satirical rejoinder. "Agreeable and easy" were about the last adjectives they would have thought applicable to that long hard journey. He suggested further, that a chain of forts should be built stretching from Manitoba to the Rocky Mountains. Portage la Prairie, Ellice, Carlton, Pitt and Victoria, should each be occupied by fifty mounted riflemen. A hundred should be stationed at Fort Edmonton and a hundred and fifty in a new fort to be built in the Porcupine Hills. He also recommended the appointment of a stipendiary magistrate, resident at Edmonton, who should be a man whom the Indians knew and trusted.

It was not however, until 1873 that the Dominion Government seriously turned its attention to the condition of the far North-West. While it is to blame for the length of time that elapsed between its assumption of control over the Hudson's Bay territory and the effective assertion of its power, still the precarious financial position of the new Dominion must be borne in mind as an extenuating circumstance. In 1872 its total revenue was only twenty million dollars, and it was generally known how expensive a luxury Indian wars had been in the United States. There in one year the Federal Government had spent twenty-one million dollars on this item alone. But it was a case for Canada, not only of keeping

order, but of preserving the country for the Dominion. American traders were already on the spot and Canadians knew, or thought they knew, that in boundary disputes between the United States and Great Britain, possession was in very deed nine points of the law.

The news of the coming of the Mounted Police to keep law and order was hailed by the Indians generally with delight. When Crowfoot, the famous Blackfoot chief, heard the news from the Reverend John McDougall, who was commissioned by the Canadian Government to make it known to the tribes, he said: "My brother, your words make me glad. I listened to them not only with my ears, but with my heart also. In the coming of the Long-knives with their firewater and their quick-shooting guns we are weak and our people have been woefully slain and impoverished. You say this will be stopped—we are glad to have it stopped. We want peace. What you tell us about this strong power which will govern with good law and treat the Indian the same as the white man makes us glad to hear. My brother, I believe you and am thankful."<sup>1</sup>

The effect produced by this news upon the whisky traders was rather different. Mr. Healy of Whoop-up, for example, did not consider that there was any necessity for such force, as the country was so admirably governed already. "There was not much need for government intervention in this country—for instance there was So-and-So. He came in and was going to run things. He lies under the sod at Stand-Off, and there was So-and-So. He had aspirations and we stretched him beside the other fellow. And there was So-and-So. He went wild and we laid him out at Freeze-out and some more at Slide-out. These bad men could not live in this country. We simply could not allow it. No, Parson John, we did not let any really bad men stay in this Whoop-up region."

<sup>1</sup> McDougall, *On Western Trails in the Early 'Seventies*, p. 186.



Another Whoop-up man, who later entered Parliament, remarked, "Well, when this is done, we will drop into line and obey the law, but until then we will do as we . . . please."<sup>1</sup>

This particular "good" man, according to Mr. Healy's standard, felt sure that he would have at least another year in which to flood the country with bad whisky and rob the Indians, and he was determined to make full use of the time.

As might have been expected, these whisky traders, true bullies as they were, for the most part slunk back to Montana when they knew that the Police were really coming. There some of them became quite respectable and one at least rose to the dignity of a sheriff. Those who remained in Canada submitted to the inevitable at once, or having sampled Mounted Police methods to the extent of six months in gaol, recognised that their day was over and that the rule of law had begun. In spite of the fact that the condition of the country was utterly lawless between 1870 and 1874, the work of the Police was so complete and so instantaneous, that a distinguished public man of the West who first entered Alberta a few years later, declared that there never was in Canada such a thing as the Wild West—probably the greatest compliment, though quite unconscious, that has ever been paid to the North-West Mounted Police.

<sup>1</sup> McDougall, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

## CHAPTER V

### THE COMING OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

THOUGH humanity and national interest alike demanded that a stop should be put to the anarchy prevalent on the Bow and Belly Rivers, it was not until the spring of 1873 that the Dominion Government began to give the subject its serious consideration. It has already been seen that Colonel Robertson-Ross, who visited the Territories in the previous year, recommended the creation of a force of mounted riflemen to preserve order and enforce the law. When however, it became known at Washington that the Canadian Government was contemplating the despatch of a military force to the Far West, the American Government began to raise objections. In view of the fact that the United States had thousands of her own soldiers at that time in the Indian Territory, it is difficult to understand what reasonable grounds there could be for her opposition to the proposed Canadian expedition. Still, Sir John A. Macdonald recognised that it would not be wise for the young Dominion to offend her mighty neighbour, and he therefore decided to bow to American prejudice, while still adhering to the substance of his original intention. The name of the proposed force was changed from Mounted Riflemen to Mounted Police, and the titles "Colonel, Major and Captain" were dropped for the inoffensive designations "Commissioner, Inspector and Sub-Inspector".

Sir John asked for a moderate sum of money in order to

raise and maintain a force of not more than three hundred men, who would keep the peace in the Territories and retain the country for Canada. It was, he said, to be a civil force, but organised and drilled on lines similar to those of a regular cavalry regiment. It was not to be subject to the Queen's Regulations and Articles of War, but its discipline was to be enforced by virtue of certain powers conferred upon the officers. A clause in the 1873 statute provided for the imposition of a penalty of a fine not exceeding thirty days' pay. In point of fact the disciplinary powers of the officers proved inadequate and were materially strengthened not long after the force arrived in the West.<sup>1</sup> The maximum penalty for certain specified offences was raised in 1875 to six months' imprisonment with hard labour, or the forfeiture of a month's pay.

Sir John stated when he introduced the Bill, that the new force would consist of a Commissioner, as many Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors as were deemed necessary, a Paymaster, Veterinary Surgeon, Constables and Sub-Constables, not exceeding three hundred in all. He wanted a plain, efficient force, adequately equipped and well mounted, and above all, there was to be no ostentatious display and as little gold lace, fuss and feathers as possible.<sup>2</sup> The Act establishing the force finally became law in May 1873.<sup>3</sup> It provided that "no person shall be appointed to the Police Force unless he be of sound constitution, able to ride, active and able-bodied, of good character and between the ages of eighteen and forty years, nor unless he be able to read and write either the English or the French language". Apparently one requirement of the law was overlooked by some of the recruits, for the Commissioner, Colónel French, states in his report that

<sup>1</sup> Haydon, *Riders of the Plains*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>2</sup> Haydon, *op. cit.* p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> 36 Vic. cap. 35, as amended by 37 Vic. cap. 22 and 38 Vic. cap. 50 and subsequent Acts.

while his men were good marksmen, many of them were singularly ignorant of horsemanship. "I consoled myself with the reflection", he writes, "that whereas little drill and no target practice could be carried out on the line of march to the West, there would be ample opportunity for the practice of equitation",<sup>1</sup> a reflection that was destined to be substantiated even more fully than French himself expected.

This Act has since been amended many times. Certain unimportant modifications were introduced in 1875. In 1877 the ranks of Quartermaster and Veterinary Surgeon were done away with and their duties transferred to local officers of the different posts. The attitude to the police of certain Parliamentarians at Ottawa is well illustrated by a remark made by a senator in 1879. He congratulated the preceding Government on the wisdom it had shown in the abolition of the office of Veterinary Surgeon. There was no need, he said, for such an officer, nor indeed, for a surgeon either. He himself had noticed that at those posts where there were no surgeons there were fewer men in hospital. Both men and horses, he declared, were better off without such attentions.<sup>2</sup>

Sir John A. Macdonald was anxious that scarlet should be the dominant colour in the uniform of the Police. Colonel Robertson-Ross stated in his report that when the regulars had been withdrawn from Fort Garry after the Riel Rebellion, and had left that post in charge of a provisional battalion, the Indians had been perturbed by the uniforms worn by that force. "Who", they had asked, "are those soldiers at Red River wearing dark clothes. Our old brothers who formerly lived there (H.M. 6th Regiment) wore red coats. We know that the soldiers of our Great Mother wear red coats and are our friends."<sup>3</sup> So this new force must also wear red

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, North-West Mounted Police, 1874.*

<sup>2</sup> *Canadian Senate Debates, 1879, p. 98.*

<sup>3</sup> *Report of Colonel Robertson-Ross quoted in Haydon, Riders of the Plains p. 26.*

coats, for the men who composed it were to be the friends of the Indians. At all costs it was essential that the natives should be able to distinguish easily these newcomers from the blue-coated American soldiers whom they hated. The uniform of the Police was admirably suited for its purpose. It was comfortable, made of strong, good cloth, and was well calculated to impress the Indians. Each trooper wore a white helmet, or a forage cap, a red tunic, cavalry breeches with scarlet stripes, later changed to gold, a leather belt with ammunition and revolver pouches on the sides, white gauntlets, cavalry boots and spurs and a cavalry cloak and cape. When mounted the Police carried their Snider carbines in a carbine bucket attached to the saddle. Later, Winchester were substituted for Sniders.

The Act prescribed the pay for all ranks which, when the work expected of the Force is borne in mind, does not appear to have been particularly generous.<sup>1</sup> Yet even after the Force had given ample proof of its value to the Dominion, some politicians at Ottawa strained every nerve to have it reduced. Indeed, many of the debates which took place in the Canadian Parliament on the Police estimates make gloomy reading for Canadians to-day. In both Houses members were to be found who were quite prepared to jeopardise the very existence of the Force by making it a pawn in the political game. Others apparently considered parsimonious economy to be the last word in statesmanship, even when the economies they proposed constituted an invitation to the forces of anarchy and lawlessness to break out once more.

Three troops were raised in the summer of 1873 and at once despatched by the Dawson route to the Red River,

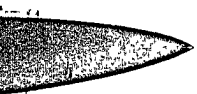
<sup>1</sup> The Commissioner's salary was to range between 2,000 and 2,600 dollars per annum, Surgeons and Superintendents 1,000 to 1,400, Paymaster not more than 900, Quartermaster not more than 500, Veterinary Surgeon 400-600, Constables 1 dollar per diem, Sub-Constables 75 cents.—36 Vic. cap. 35, sec. 26, quoted in Haydon, *Riders of the Plains*, p. 279.

where a half-breed rising was expected. This however, did not occur, and the rest of the Force was recruited in the following spring. Most of the men were Canadians, chiefly young farmers and lumbermen, though there were a few who had seen service in the British Army. The officers were mainly drawn from the Canadian Militia, together with a few British officers. The command of the new Force was given to Colonel G. A. French, an experienced British officer, with J. F. Macleod as his second in command. No more fortunate appointments than those of French and Macleod could have been made. "Just as a twig is bent the tree's inclined." So with such a body as the North-West Mounted Police, its future was to a large extent determined by the character and outlook of the two men who were to command it during the first few critical years of its history. These two men left the imprint of their soldierly characters and their strong upright personalities indelibly marked on the whole Force.

Colonel French, who later won distinction elsewhere in the service of the Empire, brought to his task the experience and outlook of a trained soldier. He expected a very great deal from his men, but as they knew that he was always prepared to work harder than anyone else, he usually received what he expected. The great march of 1874 proved that he was daring and resourceful and that nothing could induce him to swerve from what he conceived to be his duty. He possessed moreover, an excellent sense of humour, which helped both him and his men in many difficult situations. He hated political intrigue and jobbery, and was a stranger to the practice of playing to the gallery. The only thing he asked for in return for his faithful and splendid service was justice, but this he never received in his own day either from the Canadian Government or from the Canadian people. At Ottawa his recommendations were




COLONEL SIR GEORGE FRENCH





disregarded altogether or only tardily carried into effect, and his work belittled. An influential section of the Canadian Press spent much of its time in prophesying disaster during the hazardous months of the summer of 1874, and in misrepresenting both French and the Force to which he was so devoted. But time brings in its revenges, and to-day, when the paltry cheese-paring politicians who set themselves up as his critics and the ignorant and malicious editors who attacked him have long since sunk into the oblivion where they rightly belong, he is remembered with gratitude as a man who wrought great things for the country he served.

James Farquharson Macleod, to whom French entrusted the difficult task of establishing law and order in the Belly River District, was a worthy lieutenant of such a leader. By birth Macleod was a Canadian who had been educated for the Bar, but found the call of the military career irresistible. He was a member of the Wolseley expedition in 1870, and when he joined the police force held a commission in the Canadian militia. Like French, Macleod was a born soldier and a leader of men. This, coupled with his legal training and inherent sense of justice and fair play, made him an ideal officer for the work he was to do. Others might lie and cheat and despoil the Indians, but he was determined that the Police should speak the truth, do what they promised to do, and convince the savages that they were men of honour and their friends. It was not for nothing that he soon was known among them as "Stamixotokon" (Bull's Head), the strong man. As a police officer, and later as magistrate and judge, Macleod administered impartial justice to black, white, yellow and red. While some of his sentences may seem to have been rather severe, they were probably necessary at a time when his authority and the presence of a few policemen were the settler's only guarantees that the country would not relapse once more into barbarism. But



while Macleod was a stern champion of justice and a terror to all wrong-doers, he was a trusted counsellor and friend of all honest people in distress. When after twenty strenuous years spent in the service of the Territories, Macleod died in 1894, wealthy ranchers, struggling homesteaders and Indians both old and young, could remember unnumbered acts of kindness which they had received at his hand. They mourned for him as for a near and dear relative, for Macleod by his kindly humour, his sense of justice and his wise counsel won a unique place in the hearts of the people.

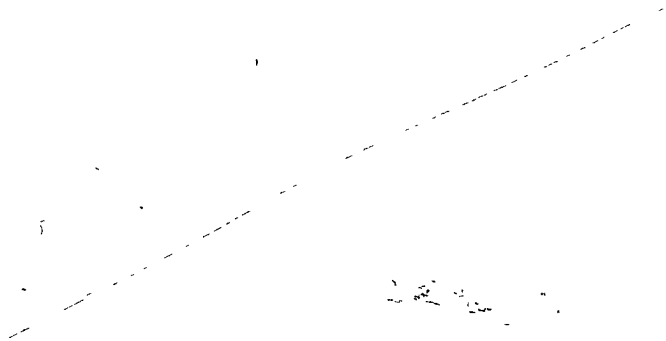
Among the other officers were such men as Captain Denny, a sturdy champion of Indian rights and the outspoken critic of the policy of the Dominion Government towards them, and Inspector James Walker, one of the best known of all the early Mounted Police officers. The non-commissioned ranks included such men as Sam Steele (afterwards Major-General Sir Samuel Steele), one of the most attractive personalities that the Force has produced. Steele won praise from French on the first great march, as later he was to win praise in the '85 Rebellion, in the Boer War and in the Great War. There were many others, officers and men, who deserve to be remembered by the people of Canada, and these names have been selected at random to indicate the sort of men who first composed this Force, and gave it that reputation of unobtrusive efficiency which is still its glory.

In the spring of 1874 at Toronto, French began to lick his force into shape, and he repeatedly told the men that if any wished to retire they might do so then and there before the real work began. Some, finding the new and strange drill too much for them, wisely fell out, but others remained only to disgrace themselves later on by desertion, when they had a taste of real hardship. At last the force was ready to move, and in June 1874 left Toronto on the long journey



COLONEL JAMES FARQUHARSON MACLEOD, C.M.G.





for the Red River and the Far West. Most of the distance to Manitoba was travelled over American territory, and they finally arrived at Fargo, U.S.A., on June 12, where the great overland trek was to begin.

At that place they put their waggons and harness together, overhauled their saddles and loaded their stores. To the surprise and regret of the people of Fargo, who had expected the Force to remain at least a week in that place, the last waggon was on its way within thirty-six hours after the first train had arrived. The whole Force was assembled at Dufferin, Manitoba, whence the great march to the West started on July 8. But by this time the first desertions had already taken place. As French states in his Report: "To get badly cooked food, to be worked hard all day, and to be pestered all night with 'mosquitoes' is objectionable, and it is not encouraging to an ordinary individual under such circumstances to be assured: . . . Oh! mosquitoes! you have not felt any yet, just wait until you get to the Pembina River or the Souris"! And so, says French, after another sleepless night, having decided that he had better give this thing up while he can, sub-constable Jones steps across the boundary line.<sup>1</sup>

As the half-breed drivers were now comparatively sober, the Force made a march of ten miles on the first day, and from then on its progress westward was steady. Never had such a cavalcade been seen on the Canadian prairies. When closed up in proper marching order it was over a mile and a half long. Owing to the unequal travelling speed of horses and oxen however, the breaking of axles and wheels "of that imposition of the country more suited to the first than to the nineteenth century", as French describes the Red River carts, it was more frequently four or five miles from advance to rearguard. "First came A Division with their

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1874, p. 9.


splendid dark bays, then B with their dark browns, next C with bright chestnuts, drawing the guns, gun and small arm ammunition, next D with their greys, then E with their black horses, the rear being brought up by F with their light bays."<sup>1</sup>

This martial array was followed by a motley collection of Red River carts and waggons, cows, calves, ploughs, harrows and hay-mowers. Armed men and guns suggested that fighting was intended, but agricultural implements and domestic cattle betokened the arts of peace. So it was in truth, for this little force had a dual function to discharge. It was to preserve the Far West for the Queen, to fight if necessary, but also to set an example to the people of that distant region of civilised existence.

These young men were all ignorant of the prairie and its ways, and they probably sustained many losses and suffered much hardship that was unnecessary. But while this is so, the fact that they still pushed on to their appointed goal showed the Indians and white men of the West that they were to be respected. They often camped near swamps and herded their horses where the grass was long, not knowing that the dry upland prairie grasses were much more nutritious. They had to learn how to prevent the horses from stampeding, which might cause a loss of several days. They had to accustom themselves to the violent alterations in temperature, between the heat of a prairie summer day and the cold of its nights. On the 21st of July the thermometer dropped from ninety-nine degrees to forty-four degrees, and five days later from eighty-six to thirty-two degrees. A few weeks' hard marching accustomed them to the virulence of the mosquitoes, and to the sudden intensity of the rain and hail-storms of the plains.

Their cooks slowly learned how to bake bread in the open

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.




air, and in the meantime the men were obliged to content themselves with uninviting lumps of dough. They knew that many people, both in the East and in the West, expected them to fail, that they regarded their whole expedition as a piece of unexampled folly, and it is little wonder that in the circumstances the language of a great many, as French states, was by no means Scriptural. When French left Dufferin, the only man in Red River who was supposed to know anything about the Bow River district and the country between it and Manitoba, encouraged him on his way with the remark, "Well, if you have luck, you may get back by Christmas, with forty per cent of your horses"<sup>1</sup>—and though he did not say it, he meant to imply that French would return with a corresponding proportion or less of his men.

From July 8 to August 4, the Police followed the trail made by the Boundary Survey parties. Within a week from starting, lack of water began to tell upon the horses, and on the 19th two of them had to be left behind. On July 29, at Wood End Depot, French sent off Inspector Jarvis to Fort Ellice and Edmonton to hold the North in order. With him French sent "A" troop, some of the weaker horses, and half the waggons, together with a number of cows and calves, and after much privation, travelling along the old trader's route via Fort Ellice, Fort Pitt and Carlton, this party reached its destination.

Having thus got rid of the worst of his horses and much slow-moving impedimenta, French started on his dash for the West. On the 4th August he left the Boundary Commission Trail and struck across country in a north-north-westerly direction, and ordered Macleod to proceed along that road to Wood Mountain for pemmican and to rejoin the Force farther west. As they advanced mud-holes grew scarcer and rations had to be cut down, horses and cattle

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.



began to die off, and the men were obliged to march much of the way on foot. As early as the 22nd of July, French ordered his men to walk every alternate hour to save the horses. Sometimes the only available drinking water, even after it had been passed through a filter, was still the colour of ink. With nothing but an occasional prairie fire or the visit of some dirty-looking Sioux, still elated with their recent slaughter of the Blackfeet, to break the monotony, these comparatively raw recruits pushed gallantly forward without complaint. Under date of August 16 French writes: "A scout came in with our guide from Wood Mountain, he is a hard-looking case, describes himself as a trapper, and says he trapped on the Bow River three years ago. Many think him a spy of the outlaws".<sup>1</sup> Wednesday, 19: "Marched about 9, to a pond about two miles north-west of our old camp, formed a depot there, leaving Constable Sutherland and seven men (five of them were sick), also a half-breed, twenty-six sick and weak horses and a dozen waggons".<sup>2</sup> On Wednesday, 26, when the Force was encamped in a valley in the Cypress Hills, French writes: "The guide Morrin shot a cabri, the first game, except ducks and prairie chicken, since leaving Dufferin".<sup>3</sup> On Wednesday, September 2, occurs the following entry: "Started about 7 A.M. When out about two hours rode up to the advance guard, and observed some moving objects near the left flankers, rode out there, flankers thought they were ponies. On going a little farther I felt certain they were buffaloes. Presently they began running, leaving no doubt on the matter. I took a carbine from one of the men and made after them, headed them and turned them towards the train, fired at one which dropped back, and was despatched by someone else; three went across the creek, I went after them, and was joined by the scouts Morrin and Levaltee, we each shot one, I fired into

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43.



the scout's buffalo as he stood at bay and dropped him. This was a very fine beast about ten years old; he made, when dressed, 953 lbs. ration meat."<sup>1</sup>

After the Force quitted the Boundary Trail, French was obliged to depend largely upon his own intelligence and the compass. His guides were stupid or dishonest, or both, and the maps with which he was provided were far from accurate. Easier trails farther north or on the boundary were in existence, but as it was the aim of the expedition to impress the Indians and show the whisky traders that the Dominion Government was in earnest, it was determined that the Police should make their own trail.

This march was also a race against time, for if the winter descended while the Police were still far out on the prairies and with no quarters yet erected, it might mean death to all. The entry in French's diary for September 6 is significant: "Started at 2.30 P.M. to get pasture, which the scout reported five miles ahead, he brought us by a very northerly course. I objected to halting in the coulee which he pointed out as there was no grass there, sent him on to another one about one and a half miles, when he returned, and had the assurance to state it was the Belly River, and that we were at our journey's end and that the Bow River was just a mile down. I told him we were at least seventy miles from Bow River, and asked him to show me Bow River, and on going to the place indicated found it was merely a turn of the stream. We have in fact struck the South Saskatchewan, half a day sooner than I expected, but an error of eight or ten miles in Palliser's map is a trifle. The scout insists that the forks are twelve miles to the north. I took it as a special dispensation of Providence my having kept a careful record of the angles and distances since we left the B.C. road. There is not a soul in camp that knows this place, and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.

the scout has brought us nearly a day's march out of our road during the last two days, and he would make it still worse to-morrow. I am not certain whether his actions are due to ignorance or design. He is the greatest liar I have ever met. He is suspected as being a spy of the Whoop-up villains, but there is nothing definite or tangible to show this. Although I have never been here [before] I will do the guide myself to-morrow. If I could have relied on Palliser's map I would have taken this duty sooner."<sup>1</sup>

Mysterious stampedes, which French attributed to his scout, were started at most inconvenient times. This man moreover, told them highly exaggerated stories about the activities of the whisky traders. They were determined to fight he asserted, and would certainly offer a very stiff resistance to the Police. Five hundred men he said, had been working at their forts all this summer. They had dug underground galleries in which to conceal themselves, and the guns of the Police would be useless against them. It was generally felt by the officers that the stampedes were started and these wild stories were circulated in order to induce French to give up the expedition. But it was all to no avail, for the Force still proceeded westward, leaving the bones of oxen and horses and pieces of broken waggons and carts to show where it had passed. "Day after day on the march, night after night on picket or guard, working at high pressure from daylight to dark and too frequently after dark, with little rest, even on the day sacred for rest, the Force ever pushed onward. . . . Where time was so valuable there could be no halting on account of the weather, the greatest heat of the July sun, or the cold of November . . . made no difference. Ever onward had to be the watchword and an almost uninterrupted march was maintained from the time when the Force left Dufferin with the thermometer registering

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 45-6.

from 95 to 100 degrees in the shade, to the time when the remainder of the Force returned there in November in a temperature of twenty to thirty degrees below zero, having marched 1950 miles."<sup>1</sup>

After a very hard week of travel, with horses and oxen dying through cold and lack of food, the junction of the Bow and Belly Rivers was reached on September 12. To his dismay, French discovered that this area which he had been led to believe was a veritable garden of Eden, was little better than a desert. As there was neither grass nor wood in the vicinity it was quite impossible to think of establishing a post there. A council of the officers was held, at which it was decided that as the animals were too weak to haul the stores to Edmonton, part of the Force should return forthwith, while the remainder should proceed to the Sweet Grass Hills on the boundary line, where it was reported that there were abundant supplies of wood and water.

It was a very critical time for French. In spite of the fact that he had ordered his officers and men to give up one blanket each to protect the horses from the cold rain, several had died, and many others were practically useless. "If", he wrote, "a few hours' cold rain kills off a number of horses, what would be the effect of a twenty-four hours' snow-storm?"<sup>2</sup> In the previous year the country between the Cypress Hills and Old Wives' Creek had been covered in deep snow by September 20, and he could not possibly reach there on his return march before October 1. The Force had now marched seven hundred and eighty-one miles from Red River without seeing any human habitations, other than a few Indian wigwams. If another blizzard such as that of the previous year occurred it would completely cover the buffalo chips, the only fuel procurable in that arid waste, and might result in the destruction of all. So, as French


<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 46.



says, while hoping for the best, he prepared for the worst.

On the 18th they camped in a coulee close to the West Butte. From there "D" and "E" troops were ordered to proceed slowly eastward along the boundary trail. The rest of the Force remained in camp, while French and Macleod, with some waggon, started out for Benton to procure supplies and communicate with Ottawa. French rejoined "D" and "E" troops on the 29th, and proceeded eastward to winter quarters. Macleod rejoined his men, who had in the meantime been instructed to proceed fifteen miles westward to a point on the Benton—Whoop-up trail.



When Macleod returned he brought with him a short, bow-legged half-breed, with piercing eyes and a long, straight nose. This was the laconic Jerry Potts, the most famous guide and interpreter the Force has ever possessed. Already in 1874, Potts was a mighty man of war among his own people. It was he who had commanded the Blackfeet in their last great fight with the Crees in 1870, which took place near the site of the present town of Lethbridge. Four hundred of the enemy are said to have perished on that occasion. Potts quickly won the respect of the Police, and continued to enjoy it down to the day of his death many years later. On the first day of the march, he rode out boldly ahead of the advance guard, and when the Force reached the midday halting-place, they found him sitting beside a fat buffalo cow which he had killed and dressed for the troops. The next day he led them to the best springs they had yet discovered. So it was always with this man. Winter and summer, rain, hail and snow, it was the same to him. Whether he had passed that way before or not, the Police knew that with him as guide they would reach their destination in safety. He never used a compass nor looked at a map, but was able to read the prairie like a book. He was not only a great guide himself

but he was a great trainer of guides, and there were few important expeditions in the early days that were not led by him, or by men to whom he had taught their craft. As an interpreter, Jerry Potts was everything that the Police required. He could always make the white man's meaning perfectly clear to the most obdurate Indians, and his interpretations of their loquacious replies were terse and to the point. Professional lawyers however, had little liking for him, as he made a bad medium for cross-examination purposes, but he was a joy to the hearts of all Police officers. He was, says Steele, a true gentleman, who possessed most of the virtues and few of the faults of the two races whose blood coursed through his veins. From 1874 to the time of his death in 1895, this silent little man served the Force with unswerving fidelity, and during that time did much to contribute to its reputation, and in his own life and work gave the lie to much stupid generalisation on the subject of the despised half-breed.

Potts conducted Macleod and his men to a sheltered lowland on the Old Man's River, twenty miles above its junction with the Belly at Whoop-up, that he thought suitable for the establishment of a new post. There, on the verge of winter, in an unknown and probably hostile country, Macleod halted his three troops and at once began to construct the Fort that was to bear his name. "I had made up my mind", he wrote in his report, "that not a single log of men's quarters should be laid till the horses, as well as the sick men, were provided for. The men's quarters will then be proceeded with, and then those of the officers."<sup>1</sup>

As he lacked many necessary tools, the work was of necessity rough, but with winter rapidly coming on, any shelter would be better than none. Long trenches 3 feet deep, were first dug, into which 12-foot logs were placed in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50.

an erect position side by side, making the walls. Other logs were placed on top of these, and the whole covered over with poles and a foot or two of earth. The chinks in the walls were plugged up with clay, and barely sufficient lumber had been brought up from Benton by bull-team to make doors, while the bare earth formed the floor. The new Fort, which was completed before Christmas, was of the usual prairie type, being in the shape of a square with two log buildings facing inward on each side. When completed, it included living quarters for officers and men, stables, workshops, stores, a hospital, a forge and a magazine, with the two nine-pounders mounted near by. The place had two gates, one on the western and one on the southern side.

Long before the new post was completed a small village began to spring up near by. I. G. Baker's store was the main building, and was a favourite rendezvous for the men, as most of them had opened accounts with that firm. Some of the whisky traders who had not returned to Montana, realising that the old order had changed, tried to do a little business with the policemen. So-called whisky, mainly raw alcohol and Jamaica ginger, circulated among the men at five dollars a bottle. A billiard room was soon opened, and a number of other shacks also appeared.

As Macleod saw no prospect of obtaining the amount of hay necessary to last through the winter, he decided to send most of his horses to Montana. He ordered Inspector Walsh down to Sun River with the horses, and instructed him to leave Constable McKernan in charge. Barely enough horses were retained for patrol work, which he had started upon long before the Fort was completed. Indeed, while his men were waiting for his return from Benton, they had stopped and searched a number of traders going south with the season's yield of furs, but had found no whisky in their possession.

Fort Whoop-up was visited in October, but the place was







as innocent of whisky as a temperance hall, and there was nothing to show that it had been so recently the scene of wild orgies and a centre of demoralisation. Mr. Davis, who was by this time in charge, received the policemen cordially, and did his best to make their visit as pleasant as possible. He showed the officers over the place, and gave them an excellent dinner, with fresh vegetables from his own garden. Denny describes Whoop-up as a stockaded Fort about a hundred yards square, built of solid cotton-wood logs dovetailed together, with the buildings facing inward. It was well provided with loopholes, and was the proud possessor of two brass field guns, which Denny thought would burst if used. The Fort was further strengthened by two bastions or flankers as they were called.

Shortly after their arrival on the Old Man's River, the first of the long line of Mounted Police prisoners were taken into custody. One of these was Kamoose Taylor, who has already appeared in these pages, and the other a negro, who later escaped, only to be frozen to death on the open prairie. These men had been captured while going south with whisky in their possession. The whisky was at once spilt and the prisoners ordered to pay a fine of two hundred and fifty dollars each, or to remain in custody for six months. Before winter set in patrols were sent north to Highwood River and Sheep Creek, while others covered the country south to the boundary line.

The effect was almost magical, and the Rev. John McDougall, when he visited Fort Macleod on New Year's Eve, spoke of the change which had come over the country as "a miracle wrought before our eyes". The whisky trade had ceased, orgies among the Indians were becoming rare, and the majority of those responsible for the iniquities of recent years had withdrawn to Montana. "I am happy to be able to report", wrote Macleod, "the complete stoppage of

the whisky trade throughout the whole of this section of the country, and that the drunken riots, which in former years were almost a daily occurrence, are now entirely at an end."<sup>1</sup>

This first winter in the Far West was a very hard one for the men. They were strangers to its blizzards and intense cold, and grateful for the temporary relief afforded from time to time by the Chinook. No new clothes were received for months after their arrival at Macleod, and so they appeared on parade in a garb half European and half Indian. Their new quarters were extremely uncomfortable, especially when, after weeks of frost, the Chinook turned the earthen floors into quagmires. Moreover, the men were obliged to wait for a very long time before they received any pay, and when it did come, it was mostly owed to I. G. Baker & Company, whose charges were little short of extortionate.

As the Indians were far out on the plains hunting buffalo, the Police patrols had to be constantly on the move, for the whisky traders followed close upon the Indians wherever they went. Thus, with routine work in the barracks and long, cold patrols in a new and strange country, the first winter in the west drew to its close, but not without some grumbling and a few desertions. When spring came the guard-room was full of prisoners. Those accused of murder and other serious crimes had to be escorted to Winnipeg, nine hundred miles away, a very difficult task for the Police, and a very expensive one for the Dominion Government. One murderer in the Cypress Hills for example, cost the Dominion fourteen thousand dollars to be brought to trial.

While Macleod had thus enforced the law in the south, his comrades were doing similar work elsewhere. At Edmonton Jarvis had brought the lawless members of that community into line, and was busily engaged during the winter rounding up various criminals. Indeed, the Police had every

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 62.

reason to be proud of its first year's work. "Tied down by no stringent rules or articles of war, but only by the silken cord of a civil contract, a hastily collected body of young men had, in the space of a few months, marched two thousand miles through a country as unknown as it proved bare of pasture and scanty in the supply of fuel."<sup>1</sup> Before the end of 1874 a headquarters had been established at Swan River, and a Fort built in the heart of the lawless south-west. A division was stationed at Edmonton, and small patrols were placed at other strategic points. The whisky traffic was, for the moment at least, at a standstill. Notorious criminals had been brought to justice and various smugglers had been arrested, and all this great work had been done by this small Force of three hundred raw recruits, strangers to the country and its ways.

In the meantime a section of the Canadian Press was busily engaged in prophesying failure or spreading loud tales of disaster. The horses were all dead but four, the men were starving and could not return, the officers were inexperienced and incapable, and so the dreary tale went on. It is no wonder that Colonel French, who was proud to count himself a member of a Force which had made one of the most remarkable marches on record, was stirred out of the official calm of his Annual Report to denounce those journalists who made the Mounted Police a pawn in political warfare. These men, instead of encouraging the Police on their hazardous march into the wilderness, by prophesying defeat had actually encouraged the whisky traders to continue in their evil way. Fortified by Canadian editorial articles, these armed desperadoes believed that Canadian public opinion was against the Police expedition, and that it would never reach the Belly River district, or if it did, would speedily return. They had already killed thirty-four British subjects at one fell swoop

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

in the massacre of the Cypress Hills, and announced that they would resist to the utmost of their power any Force sent to coerce them. These were the men whom Canadian editors had supported. "Such conduct", wrote French, "may be quite fair in party warfare, but from a military point of view I would submit that it is as criminal as it is unpatriotic."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 25.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE WORK OF THE FORCE

WHEN Macleod reported the complete stoppage of the whisky trade in the south-west of the Territories at the end of 1874, he did not realise that the traders were merely biding their time. They confidently expected that the entire Force would return to the east as soon as spring came, when they would once more be able to resume their business. But they soon discovered that there was to be no evacuation by the Police, and that on the contrary, 1875 was to witness the consolidation of Police control.

Under Macleod's stern administration, those whisky traders who still remained in the country began to tread the unaccustomed paths of virtue. One celebrity, Tincup Joe by name, with his negress, who proclaimed herself to be the first white lady in the country, were captured with liquor in their possession. When brought before him, Macleod said that, as it was their first offence, he would let them down lightly. He would merely fine them 250 dollars, spill their whisky, confiscate their horse and waggon, and send them to gaol for a mere trifle of three months. "Jedge", remarked Tincup Joe, when he heard this sentence, "I'm in luck to ketch you in good humor. But if this is letting us down light, I'd like to know what a full dose would be—you bald-headed cuss, you and your crawlers 'ull have to get up early to ketch us napping again." To the threat of another old trader whom he had sentenced, "Colonel, I'll make them

wires to Washington hum when I get out", Macleod dryly remarked. "Let them hum". Thus, in a remarkably short time this crew of desperadoes that had lorded it for so long over the Indians and had defied the law with impunity, were brought to heel or had returned to Montana, which was still, according to them, a "man's country".

It became clear before the end of the summer of 1875, that the wide district which stretched from Macleod to Edmonton was too vast to be policed effectively by the troops stationed at those two places. It thus became necessary to establish another post at some convenient site on the Macleod-Edmonton trail. It was reported that there was a convenient place for this purpose at the junction of the Bow and Elbow Rivers, and so in early autumn "F" troop was ordered to proceed northward. While the new Fort was in process of construction, the men lived in dug-outs roofed over with earth and brushwood and large enough to accommodate six to eight men. The necessary timber was floated down the Bow River, and the lumber for flooring, windows and doors was cut with whip-saws by some half-breeds of the neighbourhood. The work started in September, and by Christmas the new Fort was ready for occupation. In appearance it was very similar to the Fort which Macleod had built in the previous year. The log buildings enclosed a fair-sized square, and the whole was surrounded by a strong log stockade. It was large enough to accommodate fifty horses and men, and when completed at Christmas time, "F" Troop gave a dinner and dance to celebrate the occasion.

Inspector Brisebois, who was in command at the beginning of 1876, determined that the new post should bear his own name, and orders were therefore issued that all public documents sent from that place in future should be headed "Fort Brisebois". That officer however, had not built the Fort, and he did not happen to be particularly popular with



" FORT CALGARY





his men; and moreover, he christened the new place without consulting his superior officers. Finally, on the recommendation of Colonel Macleod and with the full approval of Mr Edward Blake, Minister of the Interior, the Fort was re-christened "Calgary", the name of the place in the Highlands from which Colonel Macleod's family had come.

Although the Police were so successful in putting down the iniquitous whisky traffic with the Indians, they were soon faced with another aspect of the liquor question, which they found very much more difficult and troublesome. Rightly or wrongly, it was ordained by the Government that no alcohol could be brought into the Territories except for medicinal purposes, and then only on a permit from the Lieutenant-Governor. The legislators appeared to have thought that the people of the Territories required an unusual amount of this particular medicine, since a permit enabled its possessor to have two gallons and a half at a time, but even this generous allowance was not sufficient. In practice the Police found it very difficult, and indeed almost impossible, to enforce the law, as the permits were transferable. An individual who had hundreds of gallons of liquor could usually produce permits to cover the whole quantity. As the country filled up with settlers, many of whom had thirsts as unquenchable as those of the Indians, the Police were confronted with an utterly impossible duty.

This work was particularly unpleasant as it made the Force unpopular with many people; but in spite of all they tried their best to do their duty. A notice which appeared in one of the prairie towns on one occasion, illustrates the attitude of some at least of the settlers to the Police on this subject: "A meeting will be held to-morrow night at Orange Hall to protest against the late mean and despicable action taken by the Police in subpoenaing respectable citizens to give evidence as whisky sneaks, thus interfering with the liberty

of freeborn subjects, and as likely to intimidate good citizens from entering hotels. Everyone should attend to protest against such a resurrected, tomb-stoned, iron-heeled law, to bear which is to suffer worse than slaves in Siberia."

When not attacked from this quarter the Police were liable to equally vituperative remarks from the drys, who accused them of being drunkards themselves and too lenient in their enforcement of the law. Thus, whatever they did they were certain to be unpopular, and despite their most strenuous efforts, the trade still went on and actually increased as the number of settlers grew.

Whisky-running became a profitable, if rather hazardous, undertaking. Liquor of the poorest quality, which could be purchased at four dollars a gallon in Benton, was retailed in Calgary and Macleod at ten dollars a bottle. A horrible concoction of Jamaica ginger and raw alcohol was sold at a dollar for six ounces, while vanilla extract was a favourite beverage of the very thirsty. In the 'eighties a more popular, cheaper, though less effective, drink was hop beer. For several years there was some doubt as to whether this was an intoxicant or not. Superintendent Deane however, decided the question once and for all. Having procured two dozen bottles of this commodity, he obtained a volunteer from among his men, and it is said that they would all have gladly offered themselves for the experiment. This man having been provided with a room for himself, was instructed to drink the beer. When he had consumed his eighteenth bottle, the man showed unmistakable signs of inebriation, and so in a trial which took place shortly afterwards, a sergeant was able to state that he had seen a man drunk on hop beer.

Bootlegging has become such a highly scientific business since the War, that the methods of the 'eighties may seem rather crude. Still, at the time, the bootlegging fraternity

displayed much initiative and a certain amount of ingenuity. Liquor of all sorts poured into the Territories under many innocent labels and by many trails. It came in eggs, carefully sealed up, it masqueraded under the labels of a wide variety of pickles and jams, it arrived in cunning containers which bore the appearance of, and were passed off as, Bibles.

The coming of the railway increased the difficulty. The railway camps were veritable gold-mines for the successful smuggler, and thus the whole boundary line from Manitoba to the Rocky Mountains had to be watched by the police. The fines imposed were heavy, but the profits were correspondingly high. Many smugglers were brought to justice, and every type of citizen was represented among those who broke this particular law. After the railway arrived every train had to be watched, but all to no avail. On one occasion a car-load of liquor destined for Vancouver was left on a siding in Calgary overnight. When it arrived at its destination, it was discovered that some of the barrels had been emptied by boring holes through the floor of the car and the bottoms of the barrels. In the long run the Police failed to enforce a law in which many of them did not believe, and which was definitely against the public opinion of the Territories. No one, no matter what his opinions might be, would give evidence, and whenever possible, the verdict of the Courts was in favour of the accused. It was a happy day for the Police, both as individual citizens who occasionally had a thirst to assuage, and as representatives of the law who had a duty to perform, when this obnoxious measure was repealed.

In addition to the stimulus which it gave to the trade in liquor, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway increased the work of the Police in other ways. The presence of large gangs of men, many of whom were of the roughest

kind, representing almost every European nation, in addition to Canadians and Americans and Orientals of various types, meant infinite possibilities of trouble. The camps drew to them gamblers, prostitutes, and cheats and all the off-scourings of civilisation. Disputes between the navvies and sub-contractors over non-payment of wages became a daily occurrence. It was the task of the Police to enforce the law among these people, see that the men did their legitimate share of work and that the contractors paid them their proper wages. In all these duties the Police succeeded to an extent which surprised the officials of the railway company, and even won the admiration of the Canadian Government. The most critical period of railway construction came when the line reached Medicine Hat, seventy-two miles from the American frontier, and was continued across Southern Alberta. Between the line of construction and the 49th parallel lay a wide expanse of country totally uninhabited except for the Blackfeet. It was only a few short years since the Montana whisky-traders had been in full possession of this area, and it was not to be expected that they would allow such an opportunity of enrichment to slip by unnoticed.

Commissioner Irvine fully expected trouble with the Blackfeet when the railway line passed through their reserve. "I would call your attention to the fact that the railway line will, next summer, enter the Indian Territory proper, passing close to the Blackfeet reserve. . . . They are as yet perfect savages able to mount at least a thousand warriors exceptionally well armed and equipped. The Indian mind being easily influenced and very susceptible, it may be that they will consider their rights encroached upon and that their country is about to be taken from them."<sup>1</sup> In view of what was to happen on the Saskatchewan three years later, and considering the experience of the United States, these

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P., 1882.*

words were not those of an alarmist. If as it turned out, the Indians remained quiet and the work proceeded with "little or no obstruction", it must be put down to the able manner in which the Mounted Police handled a difficult and very delicate situation.

Another unending source of trouble in the 'eighties was horse-stealing. Apart from the Indians, the worst offenders were habitual horse-thieves from Montana. It was the easiest thing in the world for these well-armed men to run off the animals of the settlers, particularly as the latter were frequently without weapons. These thieves were all practised marksmen and placed no value on human life. "It is well to bear in mind", wrote Commissioner Irvine in 1884, "that the American cowboy, erroneously so-called, or horse-thief, is a desperado of the worst description, who holds the life of a man as cheaply as that of an animal."<sup>1</sup> This evil became so general that in 1884 the Canadian Commissioner of Police asked for the co-operation of the American troops on their side of the boundary. The officer commanding at Fort Assiniboine was anxious to help in every way possible, but he was forbidden by his superiors to take any action, as his duty was solely to protect the Indian Reserves and recapture stolen Government property.

But if American authorities would not co-operate with the Police in their struggle against this evil, the Montana Stock Association was prepared to go more whole-heartedly to work than the Police required. This body on one occasion rounded up a whole gang of thieves who had recently been rather too active. They were discovered to have in their possession, when captured, four Canadian horses and eighty others, and so the nearest Mounted Police post was at once notified. When the sergeant who was sent to make inquiries arrived, he was told that they had been captured with defacing irons

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1884, p. 15.

in their possession. The Canadian horses were handed over to him, and he was assured by the American stockmen that, unless they kept horses in the other world, these men would steal no more. As the century drew to its close there was a marked change in the attitude of American authorities toward the co-operation of the various departments concerned with Canadian officials. Superintendent Steele and Superintendent Denny on many occasions publicly acknowledged the assistance they had received from American military officers and civil officials. However, the Police made the career of the horse-thieves so precarious, that they usually found it more convenient to conduct the majority of their depredations south of the line, but as long as horses were valuable, this evil continued, and only ceased in the 'nineties when they became unsaleable. When the market improved after 1898 the number of prosecutions under this head again increased in the annual Police reports.

Cattle-lifting was another evil with which the Police had to contend during the period under review. This was particularly common in the case of young, unbranded cattle, but the rapidity with which cattle-thieves were brought to justice and the severity of the sentences imposed upon them kept this particular form of crime well in check. Considering the enormous opportunities for theft and the great difficulty of discovery in a vast open range country, this is as much as could have been expected. The work of the Police was so effective that there was a tendency for settlers to become too dependent, and to neglect ordinary common-sense precautions. It was the job of the Police, they said, to see that crime was suppressed and wrong-doers punished, and they were frequently very indignant when they were informed that they would be expected to help the Police recapture their stolen stock. In his Annual Report for 1884, Commissioner Irvine mentions an instance which illustrates the

attitude of some settlers to the body under his command, and which, although highly complimentary, was far from helpful. "In June last a telegram was received at a Police post: 'Pie-a-Pôt's Indians stole team of horses from me last night. Will you please find them? Answer.'" <sup>1</sup> Having sent a telegram, the settler considered he had done his duty, and he looked to the Police without any further clues from him to restore his stolen property. In this particular instance the information was inaccurate as Pie-a-Pôt's Indians were innocent, and though the Police were given an entirely wrong direction, they duly delivered the team of horses back to its rightful owner.

Sometimes the recapture of stolen horses and cattle was not effected for months after the theft. A policeman disguised as a cowboy might spend weeks and even months in and about Fort Benton, Montana, picking up a clue. Constable Egan actually worked for five months for the suspected thief before he could accumulate sufficient evidence upon which to convict. Almost invariably however, the thieves were captured in the end or driven into the United States, and when, as sometimes happened, they returned to Canada, it was only to walk straight into the clutches of the Police.

Among other duties the Force was responsible for extinguishing prairie fires, as well as for apprehending those who started them. As late as 1905, in the three districts of Calgary, Macleod and Lethbridge, there were fifty-seven prosecutions under this head alone. Often however, they were caused by mere inadvertence. The wind might blow a spark from a locomotive into some dry grass, or a camper might start his fire in an unsuitable place or forget to put it out when he moved on, or a hundred and one things might set the prairies ablaze. Sometimes it was started with definitely criminal

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1884, p. 14.



intent, because some settler had fallen out with his neighbour. A fire was started at one time through the haymaker's horse getting restive and scattering the embers of the camp-fire which set the haystack alight. Nine constables under a sergeant, by dint of hard riding and hard work over many hours, assisted by all the available settlers, succeeded in putting out about thirty miles of fire, but only after it had burnt out nine townships completely and had partially destroyed eight others. The high winds which almost always accompanied these fires would catch up the blazing grass and carry it forward fifty or a hundred feet at a leap. One fire crossed the Saskatchewan River where the stream was nine hundred feet wide, by the wind blowing a piece of rotten bark which had got alight, to the other side.<sup>1</sup>

As immigrants flowed into the country the problems of the Force were greatly increased. Many of the newcomers were from Eastern Europe and knew nothing of Canada or the rights and obligations of self-governing people. They brought with them a deep-rooted hatred, of all officials and particularly of the Police, since in the country they had left behind, these were the agents and instruments of oppression. It was the difficult duty of the Mounted Police to win the confidence of these people, advise them, guide them, and if necessary, punish them, while they slowly adjusted themselves to their new surroundings in a new country. The "dreamers", as one particular lot were popularly styled, were a community which had originally emigrated from Russia to the United States, from whence they passed into Canada. Without any provocation they startled the Medicine Hat district by proceeding to burn down the houses of their neighbours. A few arrests were made and a detachment of Police was permanently stationed in their vicinity to prevent any similar outrages in the future.

<sup>1</sup> Haydon, *Riders of the Plains*, p. 169.



How completely the Force won the confidence of these immigrants is illustrated by an experience of Superintendent Deane at Lethbridge in 1894. As the coal-mines in this place developed, a motley collection of Eastern Europeans were brought together, attracted by the relatively high wages and the possibility of living in a town rather than on scattered farms. The Alberta Coal and Navigation Company in the winter of 1894 decided that it had too many men on its pay-roll. A lock-out was therefore declared and a new rate of pay proposed which entailed a reduction of 17 per cent. Five hundred and eighty very angry men were thus thrown on the community, only a hundred and fifty of whom, even provided they accepted the new terms, could hope for re-employment. The situation was bad in itself, but as frequently occurs at such times, there were a number of men present only too glad of an opportunity of making trouble. The Police, however, managed to keep the peace; and largely because of the confidence which the miners placed in the Force, they behaved uncommonly well under these very trying circumstances. Indeed, their trust in the Police was so complete that they called Superintendent Deane to their councils, and appointed him one of the committee to whom they entrusted the task of negotiating for better terms with the employers.

The Eastern Europeans were rather a turbulent lot, particularly when they managed to get royally drunk on hop beer mixed with alcohol. Weddings and other social events frequently gave rise to quarrels which led to Police action. It was often difficult to secure evidence in these cases, as the following extract from Superintendent Deane's Report for 1892 will show: "The Hungarian and Slavonian miners are a quarrelsome people and do not get on with one another at all well. They have a nasty habit of bringing long-bladed knives into play, and one such offender would have been

eligible for the penitentiary had we been able to complete the evidence against him. He was cleared by perjury on the part of his compatriots. It frequently happens, in trying cases in which these people are concerned, that it is necessary to have two interpreters, one to translate from Hungarian into Slavish, and the other from Slavish into English, and when a witness lays himself out to lie through two interpreters, of whose benevolent neutrality he is assured, he has the game entirely in his own hands."<sup>1</sup>

Hungarians and Slavs however, were not the only immigrants who caused trouble to the Police. In the wake of the American influx came a number of habitual criminals and fugitives from justice. In a new country, which was rapidly filling up with people from all parts of the world, it was a comparatively simple thing for a man who was anxious to lose his identity to conceal himself. The people of Montana, or rather those of them who came to Southern Alberta, had always been distinguished by their ready use of the revolver. In 1900 a young lady from that State attracted the attention of the Police as a result of her performance in the main street of Cardston. It came to her ears that a man of the district had been so unwise as to make very rude remarks about her character. "She made her slanderer kneel down at the muzzle of her revolver and make her an ample and public apology, which 'on dit' he did without any loss of time. The young lady then contributed ten dollars to the state coffers for assault."<sup>2</sup> In 1902 Commissioner Perry wrote: "The continued development of the country, the increase of population, the settlement of the remote districts, the many new towns that have sprung up and the construction of new railways have added greatly to our work. In the train of the immigrant has come a number of the criminal class, which though not large, will probably increase."

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1892, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1900, p. 12

When not on the track of whisky-traders and smugglers, horse and cattle-thieves, or protecting the settlers from prairie fires, and patrolling the boundary line to turn back American cattle, the Police acted as warders of the insane, guarded prisoners and provided escorts for any distinguished person who happened to be in the country. In the early days, before the railway came, they were postal clerks; and after the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway, acted as special officials of the postal department on the trains. In addition to all this they were trained soldiers, both mounted and dismounted, and every division was expected to understand its drill and to present a smart, soldierly appearance when on parade. They were carpenters, painters, blacksmiths and freighters. They had to be able to plough or reap or do any agricultural work required. They were customs and quarantine officers, they made a good deal of their own saddlery and harness themselves, they repaired their own waggons, and were required to be able to go into an entirely new district and erect a barracks, either of lumber or logs. As will be shown in another chapter, besides this wide variety of duties, a good deal of time was taken throughout the whole period by the Indians, whose interests they protected and whose savage impulses they restrained. This work was done in all weathers, and frequently individual policemen were required to do much of their travelling alone. As an illustration of the amount of freighting which the Police did themselves, Constable Armour between April 1 and November 1, 1880, with his team, covered three thousand and eighty miles.<sup>1</sup> In 1888 the mileage travelled by police horses belonging to the divisions stationed in Southern Alberta were: "E" Division, Calgary, 121,179 miles; "H" Division, Fort Macleod, 171,161 miles; "K" Division, Lethbridge, 177,785 miles; "D" Division, Fort Macleod, 45,037; and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1880, p. 13.

the total for the whole Force in that year was 923,220 miles.<sup>1</sup>

The prairie blizzard claimed many victims from the Police. Two men died during the first winter as a result of exposure on the trail between Macleod and Whoop-up. In 1888 a man was frozen to death in a blizzard, and when his body was discovered in the spring this message was found on him: "Lost, horse dead, am trying to push on. Have done my best."<sup>2</sup> Although it did not occur in Southern Alberta, the account of a journey from Wood Mountain to Fort Walsh in the winter of 1880, given by Commissioner Irvine, may be taken as a typical example of the kind of exposure to which all the Police were liable in the early days: "On my return trip from Wood Mountain, I experienced very severe and stormy weather which set in almost immediately after my departure from that post. The thermometer during the six days I was on route must have averaged something like 30 degrees below zero. The distance from Fort Walsh to Wood Mountain is a hundred and ninety miles, of this a hundred and thirty miles passes through a barren plain, where not the slightest particle of wood is to be found. The officers and men comprising the party suffered much from exposure, all being more or less frost-bitten. At times it became necessary to dig the horses and conveyances out of the snowdrifts in the coulees.

"This we succeeded in doing until a point within seventeen miles off Fort Walsh was reached. Here it was as much as we could do to get the horses themselves out of the snow. When this was accomplished, each officer and man took the harness off the horse and rode bare-backed to Fort Walsh, which was reached long after dark. On our arrival here we ascertained that the mercury in the thermometer was frozen. Everything we were forced to abandon when the horses were

<sup>1</sup> Meakin, *Canada's Own*, chap. xx.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

taken out of the harness was brought in the next day. I have alluded to my return from Wood Mountain in order that some slight idea may be formed as to the hardships encountered by the Mounted Police in the winter trips they are forced to make over the plains. The one I have thus hastily described is no exception. Similar occurrences are constantly happening."<sup>1</sup>

In 1880, two hundred and ninety-nine officers and men were responsible for the policing of three hundred and seventy-five thousand square miles of territory, which contained between twenty and twenty-five thousand wild Indians, numerous disgruntled half-breeds and many lawless white men. At first the headquarters were at Fort Pelly and later at Fort Macleod. From 1879 to 1882, the unhealthy Fort Walsh became the headquarters, owing to the presence of the Sioux in that neighbourhood. Finally, in this latter year they were moved to Regina, the new capital of the Territories. In this year, at long last, after the repeated requests of the Commissioner, the strength of the Force was raised from three hundred to five hundred, and this small body of men was solely responsible during the critical period of railway construction.

Long before 1885, the Commissioner in his Reports referred to the growing unrest among the half-breeds on the Saskatchewan, and besought the Government to satisfy the people of that area before it was too late. It would have been a very simple matter for Canada to have effected a settlement similar to that of 1871, with the half-breeds of Manitoba. To all these suggestions of the Commissioner however, the Government turned a deaf ear, and when finally, the smouldering discontent blazed out in rebellion, there were some at least in Eastern Canada, who seemed to think that this catastrophe was partly due to the negligence of the

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1880, pp. 14-15.

Police. The story of the rebellion and the part which the Force played in its suppression does not lie within the scope of the present work. It is sufficient however, to notice in passing that while the soldiers who served in that campaign were, quite rightly, rewarded and publicly thanked, the splendid work of the Police went almost unnoticed. Commissioner Irvine, who had done such sterling work for the past six years, was encouraged to resign, and a civilian who was a stranger to the Force and its traditions, took his place. But although the appointment of Commissioner Herchmer was unpopular with all ranks at the time, there is no doubt that he soon justified it. He brought great organising ability and initiative to his work, and in a short time was moulded by the traditions of the Force which he commanded, into a very able and devoted Commissioner. The increase in strength of the Force which occurred in the year previous to his appointment, necessitated a great deal of reorganisation. Further, it appears that the discipline of the Force required stiffening, and the whole machine was badly in need of overhauling.

After the rebellion the strength of the Force was raised to a thousand.<sup>1</sup> In 1894, when the area for which the Police were responsible was about to be widened, the strength stood at seven hundred and fifty rank and file.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, when the Yukon began to attract to it all sorts of lawless nondescripts in search of wealth, the Force responsible for the Territories fell to five hundred. In 1898, when immigrants began to flood the country, fifty more men were sent to the Yukon, and the four hundred and fifty who were left were expected to perform the greatly increased work with unabated efficiency. In short, during the last decade of the nineteenth century, while the number of Police detachments was increased from forty-nine to seventy-nine and the population

<sup>1</sup> North-West Mounted Police Augmentation Act, 48-49 Vic. cap. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1894, vol. ii. pp. 4655-56.

of the Territories doubled, the strength of the Force was cut in half. It was estimated at the time that in the organised Territories there was one constable for every five hundred square miles, or for every three hundred and fifty of the population.<sup>1</sup> And yet, lonely settlers could sleep secure, or leave their homes and families for days at a time without fear, because these tireless riders were always on patrol and always keeping watch.

Of necessity, the men were widely scattered, sometimes in twos and threes, but very often as isolated individuals. It was common for a constable to be fifty or a hundred miles from the nearest non-commissioned officer. They had to be responsible and trusted men, and the wonder is that so few of them proved unworthy. It was inevitable that from time to time a number of weaklings or bad men should find their way into the Force and there were some grave cases of dereliction from duty, but in the vast majority of instances where the Police went wrong, it was merely because some young constable was guilty of indiscretion. Complaints were made to the officers on several occasions that the Police had exceeded their duty, or had failed to discharge it, but very often these complaints were found to be groundless or the result of some private spite.

In the main the *morale* of the Force was all that could be desired, and its members rapidly developed a corporate loyalty which ensured that the way of the slacker would be hard. When in 1885, the men in Calgary discovered that three of their number were secretly in league with a whisky-seller to whom they communicated confidential information, they ducked one of them in the Elbow River, and the other two were sent off to Regina lest worse should befall them. In the following year a demonstration resembling a mutiny

<sup>1</sup> Meakin, *Canada's Own*, chap. xxii., and Haydon, *Riders of the Plains*, pp. 234-6.

broke out at Edmonton, under the leadership of the man who had been ducked in the previous year. This was quickly suppressed by the officer in command, Superintendent Griesbach, who, with the help of the loyal men and by a clever ruse, soon had the mutineers behind the bars.

The fact that throughout the country as a whole, a policeman was always a welcome guest on ranches and farms, proved the respect and esteem in which the Force was generally held. Indeed, there was every reason why this should be so, as is borne out by the following instance taken at random from one of the Police Reports: "Constable (now Corporal) Conradi was on patrol, when a tremendous prairie fire was seen sweeping across the country. He asked the rancher with whom he was having dinner if any settlers were in danger, and was told that a settler with ten children was in danger, but his place could not be reached. Conradi felt that he must try, and galloped off. Mr. Young, the settler, writing to Conradi's commanding officer, says: 'His (Conradi's) pluck and endurance I cannot praise too highly; fighting until he was nearly suffocated, his hat burned off his head, hair singed and vest on fire. My wife and family owe their lives to Mr. Conradi, and I feel with them, we shall never be able to repay him for his brave conduct. It is with great satisfaction that I am able to bring such instances to your notice and to assure you that no matter how trying, how dangerous, how difficult the work, the members of the Force do not shirk their duty.'"<sup>1</sup>

While the *Pax Britannica* was thus being nobly preserved in the Far West, many legislators at Ottawa had nothing for the Force but criticism. One senator was mainly interested in it in so far as the establishment of its headquarters at Winnipeg would mean more business for the merchants of that rising town. The fact that such a change would to a

<sup>1</sup> Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P., 1905, p. 3.



large extent destroy the efficiency of the Force, apparently, made no difference to this particular Solon. When his suggestion was greeted with derisive laughter he fell back on the favourite theme of eastern politicians, the present Government of the North-West Territories was far too expensive, and when the senatorial laughter became even less restrained he clinched his argument by the statement that: "He was thoroughly acquainted with the subject and knew that what he contended for was right".<sup>1</sup>

The Government signalised its approval of five years splendid work of the Police, by terminating the policy under which recruitment had been encouraged by the promise of free grants of land. There were so many candidates for enlistment by that year that such generosity was no longer necessary. Debates on the Mounted Police were always very keen, and usually much of the criticism levelled at the Force was both unreasonable and unfair. Any charge was good enough, no matter how ill-founded, for the main object was to attack the Government, and for that great purpose truth, honour and gratitude must be set aside.

Although the Dominion Government was always anxious to cut down Police expenses wherever possible, it was still more determined that wrongdoers should be punished, no matter what the expense might be. It has already been seen that shortly after the establishment of the Mounted Police, it cost fourteen thousand dollars to have a man who had been accused of murder in the Cypress Hills, captured and taken to Winnipeg for his trial. In another case, the Dominion Government was obliged to pay out a hundred thousand dollars before a criminal in the Far North could be brought to justice.

In the debate on the Police Pensions Bill in 1889<sup>2</sup> the attacks on the Police were more vindictive than ever. Many

<sup>1</sup> Senate Debates, 1879, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> 52 Vic. cap. 26.

members objected to pensions of any kind being given to policemen. It would be far better, they said, for the men to serve for five years and then leave the Force for ever. As it was, the Force was much too large, the pay was unreasonably high and the men had nothing to do. The Government was guilty of gross extravagance in the reckless way it clothed and fed these parasites.<sup>1</sup> In 1892 Mr. McMullen, member for Wellington, North Riding, moved that the Force known as the North-West Mounted Police should be annually reduced, and in the following year he followed this up with the suggestion that these reductions should continue until the Force had entirely disappeared.<sup>2</sup> In all these debates the same arguments came up time after time. The Indians were civilised, the Force was too expensive and should be done away with, and so forth. The appointment of Laurence V. Herchmer in 1886, afforded a splendid opportunity for those who wanted to attack something, but did not know what. In 1890 a select committee was asked for to inquire into Herchmer's management of the Police from the time of his appointment. This request was renewed in the following year, and after much debate the Government agreed. Two years later it was stated in the House of Commons that one hundred and thirty-seven charges had been preferred against Herchmer and of these fourteen were proved and twenty-three proved in part. The Government spokesman went on to say however, that none of the charges brought home to the Commissioner affected his honesty, his business capacity, or the efficiency of the Force. It was found that he was liable to lose his temper, which is not surprising, considering the grave and constant provocation under which he laboured.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1889, vol. i. pp. 769 ff.; vol. ii. pp. 1269-78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1892, vol. ii. pp. 2668-99; 1893, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1893, p. 2387.

These attacks upon the Force continued throughout the whole period under review, but while the critics were severe it should also be remembered that the defence was no less ardent. The Hon. William B. Ives, President of the Council, in 1894 drew attention to the contrast between the Canadian and American West. Montana and Dakota, which were smaller in size than the Canadian North-West and contained about the same number of Indians, offered a contrast in respect to the rule of law, very flattering to Canada. Whereas the smallest number of soldiers deemed necessary by the United States to preserve order was between three thousand five hundred and four thousand, in Canada the same work was done, and done far more efficiently, by about eight hundred policemen.<sup>1</sup> In 1897 Mr. Oliver, who represented an Alberta constituency, opposed the further reduction of the Police Force. He urged that whereas in the early days it was possible to deal with the Indians as tribes, now, as a result of the breakdown in tribal organisation, it was necessary to deal with them as individuals, and they were still far from civilised. The population of the Territories was increasing and would undoubtedly continue to increase, so that the work of the Police would grow more rather than less.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately for the Police, for the Territories and for Canada, Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier were both staunch friends of the Force. Had this not been so it is probable that continued virulent criticism might have resulted in its disbandment, with results to the North-West Territories too unpleasant to contemplate.

Originally the administration of the Force was placed in the hands of the Minister of Justice.<sup>3</sup> In 1876 it was transferred to the Department of the Secretary of State,<sup>4</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1894, vol. ii. p. 4658.

<sup>3</sup> 36 Vic. cap. 35, sec. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1897, vol. ii. p. 4079.

<sup>4</sup> Order in Council, 20th April 1876.

two years later it was handed over to the Department of the Interior. But to whatever department it might be assigned and no matter what portfolio he might hold, as long as he was in office Sir John A. Macdonald kept a fatherly eye upon the Force which he had created. It was largely due to his constant care and attention that it was kept in such a high state of efficiency, and among the many debts which Canada owes to this great man, not the least is his care of the Mounted Police. In 1896 Sir Wilfrid Laurier took charge of the police and proved to be as loyal a friend and as anxious for the well-being and efficiency of the men as Sir John himself. With these two statesmen ever ready to defend it, the Force could afford to neglect the remarks of lesser men, and indeed, it is probable that most of its bitterest critics merely attacked the Mounted Police because it seemed to be the most convenient channel of bringing discredit upon their political opponents.

Whatever eastern critics might say however, the people of the West as a whole had no doubt of the value of the Force. When after fourteen years in Lethbridge, Superintendent Deane was moved to Maple Creek, he left amid the general regret of the people of Lethbridge. On several previous occasions his removal had been suggested, but these intimations had aroused such a storm of opposition that nothing came of them. In 1902 however, he was moved and the people of Lethbridge, having sent their usual protest to headquarters, decided to submit to the inevitable. The municipality presented an illuminated address to Deane, in which it expressed profound regret that he was compelled to leave. "The Mounted Police are a credit to Canada and in our opinion that Force is deeply indebted to you, as wherever you are stationed law and order will be firmly established. Your work has not been in vain. The universal regret throughout the district occasioned by your departure,

is evidence of the esteem and respect in which you are held by the general public and after so many years service, it is certainly indicative of a record of which any public man should be proud." The Stock-Growers Association in the district, a body which was singularly able to value the work of the Police, passed a special resolution thanking Deane for his services and regretting his departure. What the people of Lethbridge thought and said about Superintendent Deane, the people of other districts repeated about the Police officers whom they had known.

As early as 1881, Lord Lorne on his visit to the West, was impressed with the magnificent work of the Mounted Police, and while at Winnipeg on his return journey, he paid an eloquent tribute to the officers and men. Montana stock associations from time to time sent letters of thanks to the Commissioner and his men for the way in which they had done their duty. In 1904, the Force was gratified and honoured when King Edward VII. signalled his personal appreciation of the way in which it had served the Empire, by conferring upon it the coveted honour of being styled the Royal North-West Mounted Police. The crowning triumph however, came in 1905. On July 3 of that year, Sir Wilfrid Laurier proposed an increase in pay amounting to thirty-five thousand dollars exclusive of the Yukon, and it passed through Parliament without dissent.<sup>1</sup>

Thirty-one years of untiring and faithful work had won for this unique Force a special place in the heart of the Canadian people. Thanks to it, the Canadian frontier had seen no depredations such as those which constantly occurred south of the line. There had been no organised assumption of authority by unauthorised bodies, there had been no lynching and there had been no Indian wars. The law had been enforced, the settlers protected and the Indians treated with justice and

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1905, v. p. 8657.

consideration. In the foregoing pages it has been necessary to go far beyond the borders of Alberta in tracing the career of this magnificent body. Still, as it was on the way to Alberta that the Police won their spurs and first learned to face hardship without complaint, and as moreover, they achieved their earliest and most striking successes in Southern Alberta, the people of that country can justly claim that the Force is in many ways peculiarly its own.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE OLD ORDER CHANGES

FOR a short time after the establishment of Fort Macleod, the Indians were reluctant to come near the new post and remained far away on the plains. But when they realised that these newcomers were anxious for their welfare and that the whisky-traders feared them, this attitude changed. Though no exact figures are available it has been estimated that there were in Southern Alberta in 1874 about eight thousand Indians in all, two thousand Blackfeet, three thousand Bloods, about one thousand Piegan, an equal number of Stonies and a few hundred Sarsi,<sup>1</sup> besides a few scattered groups of Crees who had intermarried with the Blackfeet. They were as yet practically unaffected by civilisation, and the work of Father Scollen had so far been almost fruitless. They had never been brought into close contact with the officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, and their knowledge of white men was limited to their tragic relations with the American whisky-traders.

Gradually, as their first shyness wore off, their natural curiosity drew them to Fort Macleod to see the Police. Most of them were armed with magazine rifles and many also carried revolvers. The dress of the Blackfeet in 1874 was similar to that of their ancestors as described by Thompson. They were clothed in buffalo robes, with the hair inside, while the outside was coloured with red ochre. This

<sup>1</sup> This estimate, which is given by Inspector Denny, is probably rather high.

garment was secured by a strong leathern belt, studded with brass nails. The Bloods and Piegan appeared in gay American blankets and the latter had them so arranged as to form a hood which they could pull over their heads in stormy weather; while the Crees and Stonies wore Hudson's Bay blankets. They all wore leggings, and bright brass rings entwined in their hair, and each man was painted according to his particular taste.<sup>1</sup> As a rule the Stonies and Crees paid less attention to their appearance than the Blackfeet, Bloods and Piegan.

Macleod was confronted with the task of convincing these shy and suspicious savages that he was their friend, that he had come among them for their own good, and that they should trust him. In view of their recent experience with the whisky-traders, they were naturally at first inclined to doubt his sincerity. White men they believed, always came to the country to despoil the Indian. Even the whisky-traders had been fair spoken at first, and these strangers, with their big guns, might well turn out to be worse than any white men the Indians had yet seen. With great tact and infinite patience Macleod grappled with his difficult task. Gradually, under his kind and gentle words, the Indians' suspicions disappeared, and before a year was past he enjoyed their unbounded confidence.

He had many long and even tedious conversations with the chiefs and principal warriors of the various bands, and always the same procedure was followed. On being introduced to him, they all shook hands with Macleod and invariably expressed their delight at meeting him. When all were seated, the interpreter lighted a pipe and handed it to the chief, who smoked for a few seconds and then passed it to the others; and all remained silent to hear what Macleod had to say. He then explained to them why the Government had sent the

<sup>1</sup> Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, p. 113.



Force into their country, and gave them a general idea of the laws which he would enforce, and he tried to make it as clear as possible to his listeners that Indians, as well as white men, would be punished for breaking them. They would not be punished however, for doing things which they did not know were wrong. He then went on to inform them that he had not come to take their land away, an intimation which they always received with particularly emphatic grunts of pleasure. Macleod told them that when the Government wished to deal with the future possession of their land, the chiefs would be consulted and nothing would be done without their knowledge.<sup>1</sup> These interviews usually ended with a long speech or speeches on the part of the Indians, for they loved oratory, and many of them were very proud of their skill in speaking. Travellers from the time of Thompson onward, were impressed with the power of their rude eloquence. They expressed their delight at the coming of the Police, which had destroyed the power of the whisky-traders. Before the Police came, all their property, their furs, their buffalo robes and their women were taken from them. Their young men were continually engaged in drunken riots, in which many of them had lost their lives. Even their horses were rapidly disappearing in exchange for whisky, so that unless the Police had come, they would soon have had no means with which to chase the buffalo, and they would have been without food. But the Police had changed all this, and as one old chief expressed it, suiting the action to the words, "Before you came the Indian crept along, now he is not afraid to walk erect." After these orations, Macleod usually gave the chief and his warriors a few presents of clothing and tobacco, with an extra quantity of the latter commodity in proportion to the number of the band represented.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1874, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Haydon, *Riders of the Plains*, p. 40.

When the first Indian was arrested for some misdemeanour and taken by the Police to Macleod for his trial, Crowfoot, the great head chief of the Blackfeet, was incensed at this interference with his authority. He therefore, followed the patrol to the fort and was present at the trial which ensued. As the proceedings were interpreted to him, he followed them with great interest, and when it was concluded he said: "This is good medicine, there is no forked tongue here. When my people do wrong, I will bring them here to be tried."<sup>1</sup> The result of Macleod's fair and impartial administration of justice and his unfailing kindness to the Indians, was that when the time came for signing a treaty with them his influence proved invaluable.

During the 'seventies, the Canadian Government concluded a number of treaties with the Indians of the North-West, and by 1877 the only unsundered Indian territory in the organised districts was what is now Southern Alberta, and it was decided in that year that a treaty should be concluded with the Blackfeet and their allies.

It has already been seen that these Indians had always jealously guarded their land, and resented the intrusion of foreign Indians, half-breeds or whites. They had endured the American trader not only because of their immoderate love of alcohol, but also because of their fear of the American rifle. They knew however, that what had already happened to all the other Indians on their borders would happen to them. Sooner or later, the white man would invade their land in great numbers, and their chiefs and wise men were anxious to make a virtue of necessity, and effect a settlement as advantageous as possible for their peoples.

Father Scollen, a Roman Catholic missionary, who had lived among them for many years, informed the Lieutenant-Governor of the Territories that while these Indians were

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107.

well disposed towards the Police and grateful to the Force for what it had done, many of them were firmly convinced, and secretly avowed it to him, that the Police would take sides with the white settlers against the Indians in case of trouble. They knew that the buffalo were rapidly disappearing, and they dreaded to face a future in which their sole means of livelihood would be no more, and when their lands would be filched from them by unscrupulous strangers. They felt that if a treaty could be concluded with the Canadian Government before these evils came upon them, they might at least be able to secure terms which would enable them to exist and retain some rights in their country. General Selby-Smith told them in 1875, that the Government was anxious to conclude a treaty, and months before the Commissioners arrived, Blackfeet, Bloods, Piegan, Sarsi and Stonies were eagerly expecting the advent of the representatives of the "Great Mother". The settlers in the Macleod and Calgary districts, whose numbers were steadily increasing, were also anxious for a treaty between the Indians and the Government. They wished to be secure from Indian claims to their lands and from Indian molestation.

At the end of August 1877, a detachment of Police arrived at Blackfoot Crossing on the Bow River, or the "Bridge under the Waters", as it was called by the Indians, for this was the place which the chiefs had suggested for the conclusion of the treaty. Although Bow River, which is a noble stream at this point, flows very rapidly, there is a natural ford which enables it to be crossed with ease and safety. On the south side there is a beautiful meadow stretching about a mile back from the river and three miles long. In 1874 the bank of the river was skirted by a narrow belt of cotton-wood trees. Good herbage abounded in meadow and uplands, the place was plentifully supplied with fuel and well sheltered by the surrounding hills. In all their wide territory, no more

suitable setting for the conclusion of their treaty with the Queen could have been selected by the Indians than this wide and beautiful plain, so full of traditional associations for the Blackfoot Confederacy.

The Police at once began to prepare for the great event. A large council tent and a whole village of smaller ones were erected to accommodate the officials, the visitors and the Police. By the time the Conference opened various traders had also appeared, and erected temporary stores in expectation of a brisk business with the Indians after the treaty money had been paid. As the day for the arrival of the Commissioners drew near, the Indians began to arrive and their white lodges covered the plain, while their horses were to be seen on all the surrounding hills. What with the barking of dogs, perpetual drumming and dancing, and continual bickering between the assembled braves, it seemed that pandemonium had been let loose. The first Commissioner was Lieutenant-Governor Laird, who had previously represented the Government in 1876 on a similar occasion, when the treaty with the Crees was negotiated. The other was Colonel Macleod, Commissioner of the Police, without whom the conclusion of the Treaty would have been almost impossible.

When the time came for the ceremony to begin, it was discovered that some of the Indians had not yet arrived. The Commissioners therefore determined to proceed slowly with the business, and not to press for acceptance till all had come in. The Indians were informed that while they were there the Government would supply them with rations. The Stonies and some of the Bloods at once took advantage of the offer, but Crowfoot, the sagacious chief of the Blackfeet, refused to take anything from the Government until he knew its terms. He thought that by accepting Government food he would thereby commit himself and his people to the Government offer.

On Wednesday the 19th, the representatives of the Queen and the Indians met. On the one side stood Lieutenant-Governor Laird and Colonel Macleod, with a number of visitors and the Mounted Police in the background. In front of them were assembled the head chiefs, chiefs and councillors who were to speak for the Indians, and behind these in a wide semicircle there were assembled some four thousand men, women and children squatting on the grass, who watched the proceedings with the greatest interest.

Laird explained why he had come and what the Government wanted. The Indians had no reason to fear the Government, for had it not already sent them the Mounted Police, who were their friends? The Queen wanted the red men and the white men to be brothers, and she wished that the Indians would allow more white men to come into their country and raise cattle, and she would help the Indians also to raise cattle if they desired to do so. The buffalo would soon all disappear, and the Queen wanted her Indian children to accustom themselves to some other form of livelihood than hunting. He then went on to outline the terms of the Treaty, and having answered a number of questions, the council broke up for the day.

On Thursday, when negotiations were resumed, the Governor asked the Indians to express their opinions. Button Chief, who appears to have been a man of business as well as a good debater, spoke to the following effect: "The Great Spirit sent the white man across the waters to carry out His (the Great Spirit's) ends. The Great Spirit, and not the Great Mother, gave us the land. The Great Mother sent Stamixotokon (Colonel Macleod) and the Police to put an end to the traffic in fire water. I can sleep now safely. Before the arrival of the Police, when I laid my head down at night, every sound frightened me; my sleep was broken; now I can sleep sound and am not afraid. The Great Mother has sent you to this

country and we hope she will be good to us for many years. I hope and expect to get plenty. We think we will not get so much as the Indians receive from the Americans on the other side, they get large presents of flour, sugar, tea and blankets. The Americans gave at first large bags of flour, sugar and many blankets; the next year it was only half the quantity, and the following years it grew less and less, and now they give only a handful of flour. We want to get fifty dollars for the chiefs and thirty dollars each for all the others, men, women and children, and we want the same every year for the future. We want to be paid for all the timber that the Police and whites have used since they first came to our country. If it continues to be used as it is, there will soon be no firewood left for the Indians. I hope, Great Father, that you will give us all this that we ask."<sup>1</sup> Laird in reply, told the Indians, that instead of the Government paying them for the timber which had been used, they should pay the Government for sending the Police to free the country from the whisky-traders. Thereupon, all the Indians indulged in a hearty laugh at Button Chief's expense.

On the following day Friday, when the meeting re-assembled, Crowfoot, head chief of the Blackfeet, a man of great personal influence and authority, announced his adhesion to the Treaty. He said: "While I speak, be kind and patient, I have to speak for my people, who are numerous and rely upon me to follow that course which in the future will tend to their good. The plains are large and wide. We are the children of the plains, it is our home, and the buffalo has been our food always. I hope you look upon the Blackfeet, Bloods and Sarci as your children now, and that you will be indulgent and charitable to them. They all expect me to speak now for them, and I trust the Great Spirit will put it into their breasts to be a good people, into the minds

<sup>1</sup> Laird, D., *Our Indian Treaties*, p. 7.

of the men, women and children and their future generations. The advice given me and my people has proved to be very good. If the Police had not come to the country where would we be all now? [*sic*] Bad men and whisky were killing us so fast that few indeed, of us would have been left to-day. The Police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter. I wish them all good, and trust that all our hearts will increase in goodness from this time forward. I am satisfied. I will sign the Treaty.”<sup>1</sup>

Other head chiefs, minor chiefs and councillors spoke after him. They were all grateful for the Police, and willing to accept the terms which the Government offered. On the following day, Saturday, the 22nd of September, the Commissioners and representatives of the Indians duly affixed their signatures, and a salute of thirteen guns announced to the assembled tribes and white men that the Treaty was concluded. The payments to the Indians began at once, and it was fortunate for them that the Mounted Police were standing by to see fair play. The majority of them had no conception of the value represented in the money they received. Some of the less reputable traders would gladly have taken advantage of this and charged extortionate rates for their goods. Some of them actually gave bits of tin as change for the money, but the intervention of the Police soon terminated these practices.

This Treaty, styled Treaty Number Seven, is similar to those which had already been concluded with the Crees and other Indians of the North-West.

I. The Blackfeet, Bloods, Piegan, Sarsi and Stonies agreed to surrender to the Canadian Government all their rights and titles to the land they claimed.

II. “Her Majesty hereby agrees with her said Indians

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8.

that they shall have the right to pursue their vocation of hunting throughout the tract surrendered . . . subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by the Government of the Country, acting under the authority of Her Majesty, and saving and excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up for settlement, mining or other purposes."

The purpose of this article is perfectly clear and its meaning unequivocal. It was largely because it guaranteed their freedom of movement that the Indians so readily accepted the Treaty, and great stress was laid upon it at the time by the Commissioners. Nevertheless, as early as 1884, the Deputy-Superintendent of Indian Affairs, who appears to have been ignorant of the terms of the treaty, or willing to disregard it, proposed that in the future Indians should not be allowed to leave their reserves without a permit from the agent.<sup>1</sup> Commissioner Irvine considered this proposal tantamount to a breach of confidence with the Indians, and as a result of his opposition to it, supported by that of several others who had witnessed the Treaty, the idea was dropped for the time. Commissioner Herchmer however, was strongly in favour of this policy and seems to have enforced it. The point here is not to consider the wisdom or otherwise of restricting the Indians in this way, but merely to show that it was contrary to the solemn undertaking of the Canadian Government.

III. The Government agreed to set aside reservations of land for the Indians of sufficient area to provide six hundred and forty acres for every five persons, with the proviso that it should retain the right to navigate the rivers and make roads through the reserves.

<sup>1</sup> Denny, *The Riders of the Plains*, p. 177, and *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1884, p. 6



When the reservations were made, it is estimated that more than twice the required amount of land was given. This mistake arose out of the impossibility of making any exact census of nomadic Indians. All those present or represented, were enumerated, and several who had no right to be there were also included. It is said that the same Indians were sometimes counted as members of four or five different bands. When the regular payments of the Indians began, a similar mistake was made. Some Indians moved from place to place as the paymaster proceeded on his way, and presented themselves for payment in each of the camps in turn. This abuse was not eradicated until the system of paying the Indians through the agents in the different reserves was adopted. One result of these mistakes was that the Indians were supposed to be very much more numerous than they actually were, and this gave substance to the belief that they were a rapidly dying people, when the first exact census was made.<sup>1</sup>

The Blackfeet, Bloods and Sarsi were originally granted a strip of land four miles wide on the north bank of the South Saskatchewan River, and the temporary use of a strip, a mile in width, on the south side, both stretching from the mouth of the Red Deer River to a point twenty miles above Blackfoot Crossing. The Piegan received a reserve on the Old Man's River, at Crow Lodge Creek in the Porcupine Hills, while the Stonies were established in the vicinity of Morleyville. The Blackfeet, Bloods and Sarsi were much dissatisfied with their reservations, and finally another arrangement was made by which the Blackfeet received a more compact area near Blackfoot Crossing, while the Bloods and Sarsi were placed on independent reserves.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pearce MS., p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> In 1889 the following official description of the Reserves was given in a Report of a Committee of the Privy Council:\*

\* Report of a Committee of the Privy Council, approved by H.E. the Governor-General in Council, May 17, 1889. (P.C. 1151.)

IV. In consideration of this surrender, the Government undertook to pay the Indians a lump sum amounting to twelve dollars a head, as well as an annuity for ever, to begin in the following year, at the rate of twenty-five dollars for each head chief, fifteen dollars for an agreed number of minor chiefs and councillors and five to every other Indian of whatever age. Her Majesty also undertook to spend two thousand dollars a year on ammunition, and when, owing to the disappearance of game, such an amount was no longer necessary for this purpose, to spend it in some other way agreeable to the Indians.

V. The head chief, minor chiefs and councillors were promised a suit of clothes, befitting their dignity, every three years, and also a medal, a flag and a Winchester rifle to commemorate the occasion of the Treaty.

VI. When the Indians should be settled on the reserve

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I.R. 145. (Sarcee.) Area 108 square miles. Number of families 112. Chief "Bull's Head". (Surveyed in 1882.)

This is situated on Fish Creek, about eight miles south west of Calgary. It is well watered by the Fish Creek, the Elbow River and their numerous tributaries. The soil is a black loam and very rich in herbage. The Indians are farming on the eastern part where the country is more open and less hilly.

I.R. 146. (Blackfoot.) Area 470 square miles. Number of families 197. Head Chief "Sapo-Maxien" *alias* "Crowfoot" and "Walos-Appu" *alias* "Old Sun". (Surveyed July 1883.)

Situated at Blackfoot Crossing on both sides of Bow River, adjacent to and south of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The principal topographical features of this reserve are a low range of sandy dunes, called by the Blackfoot Indians "Kusappo Ispalsikway" the drifting Sand Hills, situated on the northern side of Bow River, a few miles above Blackfoot Crossing. With the exception of some groves of cotton-wood on the river bottoms there is no wood. There are very extensive coal areas on the eastern side of the reserve, much of which lie in the Bow River coal district. There are extensive reaches of rich level land on the western side, and the bottoms along Bow River are unusually large and the soil is fertile.

I.R. 147. (Peigan.) Area 181.4 square miles. Number of families 193. Chief "Eagle Tail". (Surveyed September 1882.)

Situated on Crow Lodge Creek and Old Man's River, near the foot of the Porcupine Hills, about six miles south-west of Fort Macleod. The northern part

the Government undertook to provide teachers free of cost to instruct the children. The different bands were also promised a number of carpenters' tools, and on application to the Government, they would be given enough cattle to start them in stock-raising—for every family of five and under, two cows; for families ranging from five to ten, three cows, and over ten, four cows, and each band was to be given a bull.

VII. If any band preferred to farm, its members would receive fewer cows and be given agricultural implements instead, together with sufficient seed potatoes, barley, oats and wheat to plant in the land which they had prepared.

VIII. "And the undersigned Blackfoot, Blood, Piegan and Sarcee head chiefs, and minor chiefs, the Stony chief and councillors on their own behalf and on behalf of all

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of the reserve lies in the Porcupine Hills and affords superior grazing. The reserve is well watered by the Old Man's River, and by the Olsen, Beaver and Crow Lodge Creeks, and is one of the finest Cattle ranges in the North-West.

I.R. 148. (Blood.) Area approximately 517.5 square miles. Number of families 546. Chief "Mekusto" *alias* "Red Crow". (Surveyed August 1883.) This is the largest reserve in the Dominion, situated between the Belly and St. Mary's Rivers, near Fort Macleod, and about fourteen miles from the international boundary. The greater portion is a high, dry and undulating plain. There is a great scarcity of timber, but this is more than compensated for by extensive coal areas. A special timber limit was set aside for the use of the band.\*

I.R. 142-144. (Stony, undivided.) Area 109 square miles. Number of families 71. Chiefs "Jacob," "Bear's Paw" and "Cheniquy". (Surveyed 1879 and 1889.) Situated at Morleyville, on both sides of Bow River, partly in the foothills of Rocky Mountains.

Along the rear south-easterly boundary of the portion situated south of Bow River, the surface is broken by ranges of hills to an elevation of probably 800 feet above the river. Northerly slopes of these hills are in general thickly wooded with large Douglas pines, spruce and poplar. Along the river are stretches of level bench land affording rich pasture. The most easterly part is a high rolling prairie well adapted for grazing purposes. Numerous small creeks and ponds, also two good-sized lakes with excellent water. The Canadian Pacific Railway runs through this portion for a distance of nearly seventeen miles.

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\* C.S., 20/2.


other Indians inhabiting the tract within [*sic*] ceded, hereby solemnly promise and engage strictly to observe this Treaty, and also to conduct and behave themselves as good and loyal subjects of Her Majesty the Queen. They promise and engage that they will in all respects obey and abide by the law, and that they will maintain peace and good order between each other, and between themselves and other tribes of Indians, and between themselves and others of Her Majesty's subjects, whether Indians, half-breeds or whites, now inhabiting or hereafter to inhabit any part of the said ceded tract, and that they will not molest the person or property of any inhabitant of such ceded tract, or the property of Her Majesty the Queen, or interfere with or trouble any person, passing or travelling through the said tract or any part thereof, and that they will assist the officers of Her Majesty in bringing to justice and punishment any Indian offending against the stipulations of this Treaty or infringing the laws in the Territories ceded."

At the time, the full implication of this Treaty must have been only dimly realised by the vast majority of the savages. Indeed, all these treaties were mainly important, not so much because of the documentary evidence of their rights which they conferred upon the Indians, but because they represented a written declaration of the obligations and responsibilities which the Dominion Government acknowledged to its wards. While the promises made by the Government were not over-generous, in practice, Canada has been better than her agreement. Obviously, it was not desirable to render a large number of able-bodied savages completely idle by gifts of money, food and clothing. Such a policy would have been dangerous to the Territories, and in the long run disastrous to the Indians themselves. It was recog-

nised in 1877 that when the buffalo disappeared altogether, the Government would be called upon to expend large sums of money to support the Indians. In the 'eighties and 'nineties many hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent in this way, though not without bitter opposition in Parliament.

Hard upon the surrender of the territory came the worst calamity that had yet befallen the Indians. The buffalo disappeared. In a space of two or three years the Indians were obliged to go through a change in their existence, which in the normal course of human evolution might have taken many centuries. At one gigantic step they passed from the stage of food collectors to that of food producers. What a terrible wrench with their past this entailed it is almost impossible to imagine, and the unsettlement in their physical lives and the mental anguish which it must have meant cannot be overestimated. At one leap, they quitted their nomadic, hunting existence for fixed agricultural life on the reserves. To make the transition worse, the authorities responsible for this kaleidoscopic change were slow in providing the necessary food, and unduly anxious to cut it down as soon as the savages showed the slightest indication of self-support. It is natural for the ordinary man to assume that the life which he knows is the normal existence for all other human beings, and it would be asking too much to expect that the ordinary men who represented the Canadian people at Ottawa should have an unusual amount of imagination. Thus in their debates, with the very best intentions and an honest desire to deal justly with the wards of the Dominion, they tended to think of the Indians in terms of their own ordered existence rather than to attempt to put themselves in their position.

It has already been suggested that the life of these savages was always precarious. Even in Thompson's time, they were liable to be brought to the verge of famine by the



temporary absence of the buffalo from their country. Southesk and Palliser both state that the bison were no longer so numerous as they once had been. In the year before Southesk visited the prairie, there had been no buffalo in the neighbourhood of Carlton, Pitt and Edmonton, and the inhabitants of those forts were brought to the verge of starvation. The Blackfeet had been obliged to quit their usual hunting-grounds and go far out in the prairie in search of the herds. The Stokies informed Palliser that it was increasingly difficult for them to keep from starvation, for the bison could no longer be depended upon. It is necessary moreover, to bear in mind that the buffalo was in very truth the staff of life of these people. It supplied them with their clothing, their food, their tents, their harness, their fuel and the shroud in which they were buried. But while temporary scarcity had always been a feature of their lives, they were faced in the later 'seventies with an entirely new situation.

Long before this, the westward march of American immigration had added more hunters each year to those who preyed upon the herds. As the country behind filled up, buffalo robes became ever more valuable as an article of trade. On British territory a similar process was at work. The following figures illustrate the growing importance of the buffalo hunt. In 1820, five hundred and forty buffalo carts were sent out from Red River; in 1825, six hundred and eighty, in 1830, eight hundred and twenty; in 1835, nine hundred and seventy; in 1840, one thousand two hundred and ten.<sup>1</sup> Each year these half-breed hunters pushed further and further westward in their spring, summer and winter hunts. In order to defend themselves against the Sioux and Blackfeet, they were organised on quasi-military lines. They had their captains, their councillors and their soldiers, and before the actual chase began they were

<sup>1</sup> Begg, *History of the North-West*, vol. i. p. 299.

subjected to a certain amount of discipline. At night their wagons were placed hub to hub, forming a vast corral in which the horses were herded; the whole camp was surrounded by a line of fires, which were kept going throughout the whole period of darkness by sentries who patrolled the distance between them.<sup>1</sup>

About 1870 the vast herd of bison which still remained, was divided into two by the American hunters. The southern division roamed over the territory south of the Missouri while the northern was to be found in the country between that river and the Saskatchewan. Colonel Dodge on one occasion rode through a herd of buffalo for twenty-five miles, and estimated that he saw over half a million animals. When they were still so numerous at this late date, some conception can be formed of their enormous numbers before the appearance of the white man. From 1870 the slaughter of these animals assumed greater proportions than ever. Half-breeds, Indians and white men vied with each other in the reckless waste. The notorious Buffalo Bill, whose claim to immortality seems to be a singularly negative one, is said to have killed four thousand two hundred and eighty in eighteen months, and forty-eight in fifty minutes. Some American frontiersmen believed that the more buffalo they killed the sooner would the hated Indians disappear, and so zest was added to the holocaust.

As late as 1874, in spite of this wicked slaughter, enormous herds were still to be seen. The boundary survey parties in that year were held up for several hours on at least two occasions by the passing herd. Under date of September 23, 1874, Colonel French, on his way to Fort Benton, wrote in his diary that he passed an immense herd of buffalo which he and Macleod computed at between seventy and eighty thousand. About the same time the secretary of the United States

<sup>1</sup> Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, p. 94.

Boundary Commission described another herd: "The number of animals was beyond estimation. Looking at the herd from an elevation of about 1,800 feet above the plains, I was unable to see the end in any direction. The half-breeds, Sioux, Assiniboines, Gros-Ventres of the prairie and the Blackfeet followed the outskirts of this herd, but for all their wastefulness they made little impression on it." He goes on to say that it was generally believed at the time by the Fort Benton traders that owing to the destruction of the wolves, the number of buffalo was actually increasing.<sup>1</sup>

Steele relates how the Police on their way from West Butte to Macleod were disturbed one night by mysterious rumblings, which were explained when morning came by vast masses of bison, which stretched as far as the eye could see. They crowded down in the coulees by hundreds, and on the advice of Jerry Potts the men were ordered not to fire a shot lest the sound of the gun might stampede the vast herd. If that happened the entire camp might have been trampled to death, or at the very least, many of the horses and oxen would have been swept away in the wild rush. In order to ensure a sufficient supply of water for horses and men, the troopers were ordered to drive the thirsty bison back from the springs as quietly as possible. That day the routine was changed, and the advance- and rear-guards were ordered to march along on either side of the main body, while the wagon train and guns were closed up to within one yard distance from each other. All day long marching in this formation, with the men gently urging the animals away from the wagons, the Mounted Police thrust their way through the immense herd. All day long the buffalo kept very close to the line of march, and from time to time a young bull would charge along close to the troopers, tossing his head and snorting defiance at these strange intruders.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pearce MS., p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, p. 76.



There are no reliable figures of the number of buffalo robes exported from Canadian territory by the whisky-traders. After the Police came however, an attempt was made to collect duty on these exports, and though this was attended with a certain amount of success, it is almost certain that between 1874 and 1879 many thousands of robes were exported of which the Police knew nothing, not to mention the bison that were killed by the Indians for their own use. The following figures however, may serve to illustrate the rapid decline of this trade at the end of the 'seventies :

FORT MACLEOD.				FORT WALSH.			
1877	.	.	30,000	..	..	..	..
1878	.	.	13,000	1878	.	.	18,375
1879	.	.	5,764	1879	.	.	8,617

In the winter of 1882 about four hundred head of buffalo were killed south of Wood Mountain, and by that time the extermination was almost complete.<sup>1</sup> The Game Report for 1888 states that of all the countless herds of bison that had formerly roamed the Territories, only six animals were known to be in existence, two old bulls in the Wood Mountain district, three cows and a bull between the Red Deer and Battle Rivers.<sup>2</sup>

As early as 1877, the Council of the North-West Territories passed an ordinance designed to arrest the extermination of the bison. The use of buffalo "pounds" was forbidden, certain closed seasons were prescribed and the slaughter of animals under two years of age was prohibited. Although this ordinance was passed in the interest of the half-breeds and Indians, it was repealed in the following year owing to their destitution, and in any case, it was useless because it had been passed too late to achieve its purpose.

In 1878 the United States Government decided to starve

<sup>1</sup> Pearce MS. chap. xiii. p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Meakin, *Canada's Own*, chap. xx.

Sitting Bull and his followers into surrender. A cordon of half-breeds, Indians and American soldiers was therefore formed, and ordered to drive the buffalo back whenever the herds started to come north, and it was there, shut in by this cordon from their favourite grazing grounds on the Bow River, that the last great slaughter of the bison took place. Had such a policy been adopted by the Canadian Government, it can be well imagined how furious their neighbours would have been. It seems rather unjust, to put it mildly, that because the Americans had failed to handle their own Indians successfully, Canadian Indians were therefore to be afflicted with famine, and the task of the Canadian Mounted Police rendered almost impossible, for the Canadian Indians, as well as the Sioux, looked to the buffalo for their food.

The plight of the Indians now became pitiable. In the space of a few short years they had suffered more calamities than befall some nations in centuries—smallpox, whisky-traders, the surrender of their land, and now starvation. It was little wonder that the Christian missionaries found it difficult to make converts. If these were the things to be expected from their contact with white men, why should they forsake their own superstitions for the faith of their tormentors? From freedom they passed to what to them was bondage. Their old manly activities, horse-stealing, gambling and fighting, were now forbidden. The white man had aroused their craving for fire-water only to deny them its satisfaction. Their sun-dances were discouraged, and each man in the future must content himself with one instead of many wives. For all these sacrifices they could as yet point to no single advantage, and while the white men who had promised to take care of the Indians were seemingly living in plenty, they and their children were starving.

At last in 1879, came the first murder of a policeman by an Indian, and the white people in the country, both Police

and civilians, believed it to be the first of many more to come. All over the Territories, and more especially in the southwest, men went about their business with the dread of an Indian rising ever before them. If it had occurred at this time, if the Blackfeet had taken the war-path, with their hearts embittered by a sense of injustice, and well armed as the majority of them were, the Dominion might well have been called upon to face an Indian war as serious as any the United States had known. Reports of Indian distress and privation poured in from the widely scattered Police posts upon the distracted Commissioner. From Fort Calgary, Inspector C. E. Denny announced famine conditions. Every day, Indians headed by a chief came up to Calgary begging for food. Sometimes it was necessary to send meat out to them on the trail, as they were too weak to reach the post without food. Others subsisted on grass, and arrived at the Police barracks in a famishing condition. Without waiting for orders, Denny at once bought all the available meat in the district and distributed it among the Indians, for, as he pointed out in his Report, if he did not give them food, they would take it. When they received the meat, Denny states that the starving savages would sometimes leap on the carcasses before they were cold and eat the raw flesh.

So 1879 passed away, and 1880 came in, but brought little relief for the Indians. In the summer of that year some Sarsi came to Calgary, determined to seize the food they required if it was not given them, and, had it not been for the timely arrival of the Police, bloodshed would have been certain. Denny informed the Sarsi that they must go to Fort Macleod for food; and that they must leave Calgary by the following morning, "or", he said, "I shall pull down your lodges for you". When morning came, and they were still there, he went to their camp with thirteen men and set about pulling down the lodges as he had promised. The Indians made some slight

show of resistance, in which the sergeant narrowly escaped being shot through the head, and then departed for Macleod, with the Police as escort part of the way. They remained at that fort until the following year, when they were given their own reserve on Fish Creek.

In the meantime, at Fort Macleod, Superintendent Winder was faced with a similar situation. Crowfoot sent many messages to him for food as his people were dying, and Winder sent all he could. At Blackfoot Crossing the people of two hundred lodges were starving, and many died. Denny heard of twenty-one deaths in one camp. In June 1880 between twelve and fifteen thousand Bloods, Piegan and Sarsi were in camp round Fort Macleod, grimly waiting for food which the Police could only dole out in very small quantities, as their own stores were rapidly nearing depletion. During that summer upwards of seven thousand starving Indians, men, women and children, appeared before the gates of Fort Macleod, and Winder did his best, at the risk of starving himself and his men, to help them all.

Through Inspector Denny the Blackfoot chiefs appealed to Princess Louise, wife of the Governor-General Lord Lorne: "Our people are starving. Do help us, for some of us have nothing to eat, and many of us can find none anywhere. We have heard that the daughter of our Great Mother is now on this side of the Great Lake. She has her Mother's heart. Let her know that mothers and little ones ask her to give them life for our Great Mother's sake. She is good and will hear us. Save us. Too many other people eat our buffalo—Sioux and half-breeds—and we have nothing to eat ourselves."

The speech from the throne for 1880 and 1881 contained references to the alarming condition of the plains Indians. As a result of this a certain amount of assistance was received from the East, which enabled Denny to relieve the distress of a few of the most needy. So 1880 passed through

its lean course, and 1881 came in, but again there was little improvement.

Indeed, the Mounted Police fully expected 1881 to be more disastrous for the Indians than the two preceding years. From the time of the signing of the Treaty down to that year, the Indians were never all present in the country at one time. At the time of the conclusion of the Treaty some buffalo were still to be found, and the natives were relatively opulent. When the lean time came many of them went south to Montana in pursuit of the herd. There some of them remained, and, free from the restraint of the Police, became high-handed and truculent. Thus, when they returned in 1881, the problem of dealing with them was more serious than ever. They were hungry, and they saw herds of cattle on the open range. From infancy they had been trained to steal. A few of them settled down on their Reserve in this year, but it was not to be expected that they would all do so. The young men particularly were restive, for they found that just when they arrived at the age when their forefathers had gone on the war-path, and collected many scalps and much booty, they were restricted in all directions by the white man and his law.

Both in the East and in the West there were people who justified their passive acceptance of famine and death for the Indians, with the superficial reflection that these things were inevitable, but such people were not to be found either among the officials of the Indian Department or among the members of the North-West Mounted Police.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INDIANS IN TRANSITION

IT is always difficult, and seems indeed to be almost impossible, for any Government no matter how well intentioned it may be, to hold the scales of justice evenly between two peoples who live in the same country, but occupy different stages in human development. If the savages only are considered, the civilised peoples are neglected and the country does not develop. More usually however, the interests of the aborigines are subordinated to those of the newcomers, often with tragic results. Canada can at least claim that, although some mistakes were made and some acts of injustice occurred, her record is relatively good as compared with many other countries. She has never treated her natives in the way that the Masai, a people who have many characteristics in common with the Blackfeet, were treated in Kenya. She has never dispossessed the Indians of their Reserves, once they were given, and there have been no compulsory migrations such as have occurred in other countries. Indeed, on the whole she has kept faith with her wards and done her best to grapple honestly with a very difficult problem.

During the period of transition the Canadian Parliament spent a good deal of its time in debates on Indian policy. Frequently, members showed profound ignorance of the subject which they discussed and a lack of common sense. For example, in 1879, one member declared that the only

way to deal with the Indians successfully was to induce them to adopt agriculture at once, break up the tribal system and destroy the power of the chiefs.<sup>1</sup> Another member in the following year advocated a policy whereby the Indians would be placed forthwith on a footing of complete equality in political rights and duties with other subjects. All race distinctions, he urged, should be done away with at once.<sup>2</sup> Later on it was proposed to remove all the Indians bodily from their present reserves and give them others in the country to the north of the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. There they would be able to hunt, live their natural life and would not impede settlement. At the time it was pointed out that the Blackfeet and other Indians would be disinclined to fall in with such a policy, and even if they were moved to new reserves in the north, as there was already a scarcity of food there, the change would probably entail starvation for the Indians or else the expenditure of vast sums of Canadian money, an argument that was always conclusive.<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately the Canadian Government was never convinced by this reasoning, though Sir John A. Macdonald seems to have given the idea of moving the Indians to the north his serious consideration and approval. On March 24, 1882, he stated in Parliament that it was the policy of the Canadian Government to procure reserves for the Indians north of the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway and away from the frontier, a policy which, happily for the good faith of the Dominion, was never carried out.<sup>4</sup> In the main, Sir John's policy was sound. Speaking in Parliament in 1880, he said in reply to the usual suggestions that the Indians should be treated on a footing of equality with other people, that the Government must befriend and protect its

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1879, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1880, p. 1695.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1880, p. 1990.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1882, p. 542.

wards, that the policy of giving Indian lands away, enfranchising the Indians and giving patents for their lands would be a failure in Canada, as it had proved a failure in the United States. "You cannot make the Indian a white man . . . you cannot make an agriculturist of the Indian, all we can hope for is to wean them from their nomadic habits and by slow degrees absorb them or settle them on the land."<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately the principles that were advocated by Lieutenant-Governor Morris, that Canada must keep faith with her Indians, that tribal organisation must be maintained for the time being and the power of the chiefs supported, were generally accepted. It is in the best interests of native races, as Lord Lugard has so brilliantly shown, that they should be allowed to develop along their own lines in their own way, making their peculiar contribution to human experience. Those of their customs and usages not repugnant to civilisation should be retained as long as possible in order to preserve some contact with reality, while they are preparing to embark on the great adventure of a new and strange existence.

Down to 1880 Indian affairs were in charge of a special branch of the Department of the Interior. In this latter year the Indian question came up for consideration and the Indian Department was set up as a separate entity, but still under the Minister of the Interior. This was done because it was felt that the Indian affairs had now become sufficiently onerous to require the exclusive attention of a whole department.<sup>2</sup> In 1883 an act was passed which enabled the Government to transfer the Superintendency of Indian Affairs to any Department other than that of the Interior, if it thought such a change desirable.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1880, p. 1991.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1880, p. 1989.

<sup>3</sup> 46 Vic. cap. 6; Canadian Hansard, 1883, pp. 1335, 1387.



It seems undeniable that the new Department was at first unduly economical with its agents. It would surely have been better for the Government to have justified the expenditure of considerable sums on the Indians on the ground that, where a breach of trusteeship would result from it, the virtue of economy could be overdone. Just as the directors of the East India Company ordered Warren Hastings to practise strict justice and moderation, and enjoined him to send home more money, which rendered such a policy impossible, so the Indian Department at Ottawa required its agents to show indications of progress among the Indians under their control, while ordering them to cut down expenses so drastically that nothing substantial could be done. Indeed, the chief effect of this policy was to lessen the Indians' respect for the agents and in some instances, to render the lot of the aborigines more depressing than was necessary.<sup>1</sup> The experience of Denny, who was responsible for the arrangements under Treaty No. 7, affords a good illustration of this unwisdom. Denny's whole staff consisted of a clerk, a storekeeper, a teamster and an interpreter. Each month he was required to visit the five Reserves in his charge, as well as the two Indian supply farms. As there were no railways at that time in the south, this entailed the expenditure of much time in moving from place to place.

The Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs however, decided that Denny's staff was excessive, so at the end of 1884 he despatched the following letter: "I have to inform you that the Superintendent-General is of the opinion that there exists no necessity for employing a clerk in your office. Consequently you will, after giving him a month's warning, discharge him, as it is considered that you ought to be capable of performing all the office work in your agency, as well as supervising the issue of supplies from the store. The store-

<sup>1</sup> Deane, *Mounted Police Life in Canada*, pp. 81-2.

keeper should therefore be dismissed, and you are consequently required to act as storekeeper, and to restrict yourself to one visit each month to each of the Reserves within your district, and on making your visit, you are to lock your office and storehouse, and take the interpreter with you to act as servant and interpreter. . . . The Superintendent-General is of the opinion that no assistant instructors are necessary, and that the employment of officials has a bad effect. The instructors ought to be able to supervise all the Indians in their respective districts." To this Denny replied: "Sir, I have the honour in reply to your letter . . . to state that I have notified my clerk and also the storekeeper of the instructions contained therein. . . . I beg to inform you I cannot undertake to do this work, and I therefore think it best to notify you of the same, as I have always, and shall always, do my work thoroughly, and I do not see my way to doing so in this instance. The work of a clerk in my office takes all his time from one month's end to the other, and I cannot do this and look after my treaty. . . . I therefore beg that I be allowed to resign my position as Agent of this Treaty as soon as convenient to the Department."<sup>1</sup>

This short-sighted policy of unreasonable parsimony applied generally throughout the Territories, undoubtedly contributed to the unrest which culminated in the rebellion of the following year. Furthermore, it aggravated one of the difficulties with which the Department had to contend during its early years; it resulted in good men like Denny being driven out and being replaced by others who were strangers to the

<sup>1</sup> Denny, *The Riders of the Plains*, pp. 175-6.

It is interesting to note that during the progress of the rebellion of 1885, Denny was appealed to, and on his pointing out that he had no authority to act, having resigned his agency, he received the following telegram from the Lieutenant-Governor: "You are authorised to act for the Government in Indian matters in any way which you may deem advisable". Denny thereupon took charge of the Treaty for the summer and subsequently received the Government's thanks "in a flowing letter".—Denny, *Riders of the Plains*, pp. 200-6.

work and to the Indians. It is significant that when Denny resigned, the Department found it necessary to adopt a policy the reverse of the one which had induced him to give up his post. His district was divided into three agencies, and each agent received the same salary as his had been. They were also each provided with a clerk, a farm instructor and assistant, together with other subordinates.

When the Indian Department did not drive good men from their posts by needless economies, the agents were sometimes called upon to avoid a policy advised by men ignorant of the actual situation in the Reserves. In May 1885 for example, when the rebellion was still in progress, Denny received the following telegram: "A few Crees, about thirty in number, skulking round Cypress. Would like Blackfeet to clear them out. Could this be done quietly. Advise me before taking action." Denny replied: "Better not send Blackfeet. Would all wish to start out. Could not keep track of them." If Denny had fallen in with this suggestion, as he himself says, a nice little Indian war would have been started, the results of which would have been incalculable.<sup>1</sup>

In the main the Indians adjusted themselves to their new environment more quickly than might well have been expected. Naturally, they did not at once become completely civilised, but within twenty-five years after the Treaty, a very short period in the lifetime of a people, they already showed signs of advancement. The Mounted Police rendered invaluable aid to the Indian Department during this period of transition, and without them, it is certain that the process of assimilation would have been much slower.

The arrival of new settlers caused additional uneasiness. The experience of the United States was not without its warning to Canadian authorities. So long as there had been no settlers on the scene, the American army had very little

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 202.

difficulty with the Indians, and trouble only began with the coming of the immigrants. "These settlers, unaccustomed to the Indian manners and habits, do not make due allowance and exhibit that tact and patience necessary to deal successfully with Indians, and which is shown them by an organised force kept under control."<sup>1</sup>

As an illustration of what might be expected, the Commissioner mentioned a case in which a settler near Fort Walsh had struck an Indian in the face, merely because he found him leaning on his garden wall. The result of this was that a body of Indians soon appeared on the spot, and were proceeding to root up the whole garden, when the Police arrived and put a stop to this perfectly justifiable act of retaliation. Inspector Irvine reported another bad case from Macleod in 1879. A Stony killed a settler's cow for his starving family. He at once went to the owner of the animal and offered his horse in exchange, but the settler refused and complained to the Police, and the unfortunate Indian was fined twenty dollars. Inspector Irvine was afraid that if immigrants came in too quickly such cases would become frequent, and in the long run lead to serious breaches of the law, such as had occurred south of the line. Thus the relatively slight stream of immigration into the Territories between 1880 and 1900 was on the whole fortunate. The Indians were gradually accustomed to the white man's civilisation and were not plunged at once, as was the case with other aborigines, into the complexities and problems of a fully organised community.

In 1884 the Stonies were credited by the Government with more development than had actually taken place. As it was reported that they were doing surprisingly well on their farms, it was decided by the authorities, ever on the look out for economies however unwise, that their rations should be

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P., 1880, p. 6.*

discontinued. The result was that in the following winter this tribe faced the horror of unnecessary famine. They wandered by hundreds from their Reserve, south as far as Pincher Creek, in search of food. Sometimes twenty at a time were fed by the bigger ranchers, and the settlers as a whole did their best to relieve their distress. The excellent relations which existed between the Indians and the white people proves the latter conducted themselves toward the natives in a considerate way; and when the treatment meted out to native races by white settlers in other parts of the world is borne in mind, this is something of which the pioneers of Southern Alberta and their descendants have every reason to be proud.

The Indians gradually dropped many of their old practices. The sun-dance, shorn of much of its glamour, continued to take place each year down to the early 'nineties. By that time, however, according to Steele, it had lost its appeal for many of the young people, some of whom did not bother to attend the functions. Indeed, the officials of the Indian Department and the Mounted Police discouraged these dances, as they always led to restlessness and sometimes actually to crime. Certain of the more savage ones were prohibited altogether; and to show the Indians how seriously the Indian Department regarded breaches of its regulations on this subject, nine cases of conviction and punishment occurred in 1903.<sup>1</sup>

There is good reason for believing that some Indian officials were unduly zealous in their hostility to dancing. Certainly this was the view of Lord Minto, to whom some of the Indians appealed on this subject when he visited the West in 1900. Lord Minto describes the official responsible for the latest limitation placed upon the Terpsichorean customs of the natives, as "a tall cadaverous Scotchman, more

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1903, p. 7.

like an elder of the Kirk than anything else, and had the most depressing effect on me . . . I cannot conceive his ever approving of dancing! But why should not these poor people dance? It is their only amusement, and sober beyond words in comparison to a Scottish reel. Of course the Sun Dance and its cruelties it was right to stop, but surely not all dancing. . . The ridiculous wish to cut it down, root and branch, on the part of narrow-minded authorities makes me sick, and I said plainly that I saw no harm in it, and was in no way opposed to it. I suppose I shall be reported as usual as in violent opposition to my ministers. I don't care a damn, as I am convinced all reasonable people who know the Indians agree with me, and I believe my speaking out occasionally does much good."<sup>1</sup>

For years the old habit of horse-stealing persisted, and gave the Police much anxiety. Even after the Force arrived in the West, thieving expeditions went far afield as in the time of Thompson. Denny states that he knew of cases where Indians went as far south as Salt Lake City, and that they never returned without bands of stolen horses. With the Indians about, no man could be sure of his property. Men who feared that the presence of Indians in their neighbourhood betokened a raid on their horses, sometimes went to sleep with their horses held by a lariat, the other end of which was fastened round their own bodies, but all to no avail, for they awoke in the morning to find the rope cut and the horses gone.

While many settlers had their horses stolen by the Indians, the most difficult Police cases of this description arose over thefts perpetrated by Canadian Indians in the United States, or by American Indians and other thieves in Canada. The American Indians soon discovered that once south of the boundary line, they were safe from the pursuit of the Mounted

<sup>1</sup> Buchan, J., *Lord Minto: A Memoir*, pp 176-7.

Police, while the Canadian Blackfeet and their allies realised that once they had arrived north of the 49th parallel, they would no longer be pursued by Americans. This idea of a boundary line appealed to the Indian sense of humour, and so it was commonly known among them as the "medicine" line. These expeditions were sometimes conducted on a large scale, as in 1883 when a party of Canadian Indians swept all the horses out of one entire district. They did not however, retain their booty long, as the Police were on their trail almost as soon as they crossed into Canada. Eleven stolen horses were collected from one group of Indians and thirty-two from another. They were duly handed over to their owners and the Indians were warned that if sufficient evidence could be discovered, they would be severely punished.

But while Americans almost always received their stolen property back again, the Canadians for many years were not so fortunate. Horses stolen by American Indians and traced to Indian reserves south of the line could not be returned, "as the United States Indian Department did not show the same disposition to aid our citizens as we have invariably, as far as lay in our power, accorded them". Sometimes when the animals were recovered, although the culprits were thoroughly well known to the American authorities, they were not punished, as their crimes had not been committed on American soil. Public opinion in Montana frequently became very hostile over the depredations of Canadian Indians in their territories, but the officials of the Police had much reason for resenting journalistic excesses which only told half the truth. "Anyone not familiar with the circumstances would think, on reading the reports in the Montana press, that our Indians were the only guilty ones and that their people were the only sufferers."<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, while Canadian Indians were busy stealing

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.I.V.M.P.*, 1883, pp. 17-18.

American horses, American Indians were similarly occupied in Canada. As however, the Canadian Indians were always obliged to give up their booty and frequently sent to the penitentiary in addition, while the American Indians went free, the honours of war lay with the United States.

The raids of Canadian Indians south of the line were stopped by the Canadian Mounted Police, but for years the American authorities did nothing to prevent their Indians from making raids into Canada. During the summer of 1883, Canadian horses were stolen every week, and every settler along the line, as well as many railway contractors and others, suffered. It was a very simple thing for the American thieves who knew the country thoroughly, to run the horses off into the Cypress Hills, where discovery was very difficult, and later, when well rested, to make a dash for the wooded country on the Missouri, which they could reach in a day's ride. Once there they were perfectly safe from pursuit, and the Police Report states that this wooded country harboured not only thieving Indians but most of the horse-thieves in the country. When the Canadian Indians realised how their American kinsmen fared, they began to grow restive under what seemed to them to be a policy of gross injustice. American Indians who stole their horses and deprived them of their means of transport, went unpunished and prospered on the sale of the stolen animals. When however, they retaliated, even though the odds were still in favour of the Americans, they were punished by their friends the Mounted Police, to whom they had done no harm. Throughout the 'eighties, in spite of the most vigilant patrols of the Police, American Indians continued to raid Canadian herds, while Canadian Indians continued to retaliate.

In the 'nineties, the Bloods, Piegan and Blackfeet added a new feature to their equestrian activities. It was perhaps an indication of their growing civilisation that they now realised



the advantages of smuggling horses into Canada free of duty, but this practice never became as widespread as horse-stealing. In later years American officials more than made up for their failure to co-operate in the earlier period. Thus in 1892, Commissioner Herchmer stated: "Great assistance has been given us by the Agents of the South Blackfeet Reserve in the United States' Territory, and they refused to harbour refugees from Canada".<sup>1</sup> Steele and other Police officers constantly referred in their reports to the generous assistance they received from various American officials.

Throughout the whole of the pioneer period in fact, horse-stealing continued. As late as 1904 a number of young Bloods, who incidentally had been trained in the Indian schools, were apprehended and punished for this crime. Indeed it would have been absurd to expect otherwise, for a custom which has become almost second nature to a people does not speedily disappear. It was a very difficult thing for the Indians to adjust themselves to the white man's moral code; even civilised nations, who have a common moral tradition, frequently find it almost impossible to understand each other's point of view, and it is to be expected that the problem becomes still more difficult where civilised and uncivilised peoples are concerned. Gambling, horse-stealing and killing had always been esteemed as virtues in former times by these people. The man who excelled as a horse thief and who could show the largest number of scalps had been revered as a great warrior, commanding respect and deserving emulation. Now, such a man was to be regarded as a criminal to be hunted down and sent away to a penitentiary in the East, which to these free children of nature was a punishment worse than death. They found it impossible to regard as vices the virtues which their parents had inculcated, and which their wise men and story-tellers had praised. Many

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1893, p. 2.

of those who were sent to the penitentiary for horse-stealing or for some other crime died in prison, or returned to their people mere shadows of the braves they had once been.

It is impossible not to feel that Denny and other Police officers were right when they said that too much was expected of these Indians at first, and that many of the sentences imposed upon them were unduly severe. Seven years in the penitentiary for stealing might be a reasonable punishment for a white man who presumably knew better, and for whom close confinement in prison was endurable, but for an Indian it was far too much. More lenient punishments might have been just as effective, though undoubtedly the possibility of several years in the penitentiary was a great deterrent to crime among these Indians. A Blood Indian, accused of horse-stealing, received a sentence of a month in the guard-room, as the evidence against him was not very strong. When he heard his sentence he broke into a hearty laugh, and asked to be freed from the ball and chain which the Indians in custody were obliged to wear attached to their ankles. He said he had been sentenced to one month's hard work, which he was willing and anxious to do, but which would be impossible unless he was freed of the encumbering chain. It turned out that his laughter arose from the fact that he had expected three years in the penitentiary, and was therefore very glad to do a month's hard work.<sup>1</sup>

In the interests of the Indians the habit of horse-stealing had to be eradicated, and it is possible that, looked at in this light, though the sentences were severe, they were probably justifiable. Each year the number of settlers in the country increased, and their herds of cattle and horses covered the range. If the Indians persisted in their thievish ways and the Police treated their crimes leniently, it was possible that the ranchers might have taken the law into

<sup>1</sup> Deane, *Mounted Police Life in Canada*, pp. 285-6.

their own hands. This had happened in the States, and if it had occurred in Canada its consequences would undoubtedly have been more disastrous to the Indians as a whole than a few very severe sentences.

Cattle-killing was another habit that the Indians found great difficulty in discarding. They naturally regarded herds of cattle on the open range much as they had regarded herds of bison. The fact that some particular white man said that they belonged to him, and marked them with red-hot irons, made little difference. The white man was always doing curious things which the Indian did not understand. It seemed to him cruel and unjust that these animals should be allowed to graze on the open prairie while the Indian was starving, as many of them were between 1879 and 1882. In the 'nineties a good deal of trouble arose as a result of the invasion of the Reserves by range cattle. The Indians knew that the Reserves were theirs, and they argued that therefore nobody else had any right to allow his cattle to stray on Indian land. So, as a protest, they took the liberty of shooting such cattle when required. The Police reports throughout the 'eighties and 'nineties and also in the present century, frequently refer to cases where Indians had killed other people's cattle. But as the Indians began to accumulate herds of their own, and as the days of hunger and starvation were left far behind, cattle-stealing definitely declined.

Drunkennes remained down to 1905 a constant evil among the Indians. Available evidence seems to suggest that the passing of the Licensing Act tended to increase this particular form of vice. Unfortunately there were always some white men who were willing to profit by this weakness of the Indians. The worst offenders however, were the half-breeds, who were sometimes almost indistinguishable from the Indians, and who had no scruples whatever about supplying

the latter with the liquor they required. Anything was good enough for the Indian, and the smugglers, before the Licensing Act, usually diluted the spirit with water and added blue-stone and tobacco or any other ingredients however unsuitable, sometimes with results fatal to the natives. The Indians would drink anything so long as it had a "bite" in it. Red ink, Pain-killer and Florida water were favourite beverages. The Sarsi, for example, who were the hardest drinkers of all, excelled themselves in 1888. Having secured a case of Pain-killer in some illegal way, they mixed it with Florida water and some raw alcohol. These ingredients were poured into a large skin cauldron, a dash of tobacco and blue-stone were added and the mixture brought to the boil. The Indians proceeded to consume this loathsome brew until there was not a drop left, by which time the whole camp, including three-fourths of the children, were completely intoxicated.<sup>1</sup> Among the Blackfeet, Bloods and Piegan there were eighty-nine cases of drunkenness in 1901 and fifty-three persons convicted of supplying intoxicants to Indians. In the following year the number of convictions under these headings increased by forty-two and six respectively.<sup>2</sup> After 1903 there was a steady decrease in convictions for drunkenness down to 1905, which the Police officers attributed not to growing virtue, but to greater cunning among the Indians in the concealment of the sources from which their drink was obtained. Frequently the sentences imposed upon those convicted of selling liquor to Indians were ridiculously light. Here, at any rate, there was every reason for severity, for liquor meant for the Indians degradation, loss of stamina and death. It is hard to imagine how any sentence could have been too severe upon the white man who was prepared to profit in a trade which he knew was so wholly evil. In the

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1901, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1902, p. 5.

early days there were many instances in which the Indians resisted arrest. Usually the expostulations of the Police sent for the purpose were sufficient, but sometimes a show of considerable force was necessary. Invariably the Indians gave up their man in the end, and usually in these cases the chiefs received a severe lecture from the Police, and sometimes a few days in the cells.

The most anxious period for the Police was, of course, the year 1885. Long before the outbreak of the rebellion, the Mounted Police were fully cognisant of Riel's arrival on the Saskatchewan, of his meetings with the half-breeds and Indians and of his many promises. On the very day of his arrival at Duck Lake, Inspector Crozier announced his advent to the authorities at Ottawa. As early as July 1884, it is clear from his report that Crozier was fully aware of Riel's intentions and that he knew a good deal of what Riel had said, as he recommended that precautions should be taken in order to prevent these meetings from resulting in anything more than words. But still the Canadian Government could not or would not be convinced.

Riel however, was not only busy with the half-breeds and Indians of the Saskatchewan, as he also attempted to play upon the suspicions and fears of the Blackfeet and their allies. In the summer of 1884, Steele heard through one of his men who spoke Cree and understood Blackfoot, that a strange half-breed had been talking with the Indians near High River. This man had come over from Montana with Louis Riel. He told the Indians that they had a right to kill the settlers' cattle if they chose, that the country belonged to them and that the white men should be turned out. About the same time Magnus Begg, then agent on the Blackfoot reserve, complained to Steele that he was not satisfied with the conduct of the Indians. He said that a man who answered to the description given of the one who had come over with Riel, was

in the Blackfoot camp. As a result of the stranger's words, the braves were getting restive, so Steele determined to take the man in charge. He was arrested in the Blackfoot camp on a charge of vagrancy, but managed to escape. Steele thereupon went to Blackfoot Crossing with a strong force, in order to make sure of his man. He was re-arrested in the teeth of some opposition on the part of Crowfoot, whom Steele believed to be on the verge of making trouble. Later, in Court, he confessed that he had come over with Louis Riel from the United States. He received a month in the guard-room, with the caution that if he did any further mischief, he would be dealt with more severely.

While on this subject it is noteworthy that opinions on the character of Crowfoot were divided. According to one group of people, and incidentally the group whose opinion most writers have adopted, he was almost wholly estimable and a model of what an Indian chief should be. According to the other group, many of whom were Mounted Police officers, and presumably therefore, knew more about him than anybody else, he was quite the reverse, and their opinions of the old chief were far from flattering. On the whole it seems that Crowfoot was throughout perfectly loyal, but he had a very difficult task in controlling his turbulent warriors. The Blackfeet were pre-eminently a fighting people, and between the years 1879 and 1885 they were very often under grave provocation to go on the war-path. Crowfoot was not only a wise but a proud, strong man, and he must often have found it exceedingly difficult to accept the orders of white officers. Like all Indians in Southern Alberta at the time, he was embittered by the grim experiences through which his people had passed since the coming of the whisky-traders, and there is no doubt that he was often critical of the Canadian Government and very outspoken in his remarks. In 1878 for example, he spoke with great heat to Colonel Macleod, whom



CHIEF CROWFOOT OF THE BLACKFEET





he trusted and whom he knew to be his friend, and later on there were other times when he tended to be defiant and high-handed with the Police officers.

Whatever Crowfoot may have been tempted to do from time to time, it is certain that when the crisis came his loyalty was unimpeachable. During those critical spring months of 1885 his braves must often have besought him to take the war-path. But he withstood them all; his enormous influence throughout the whole period of the rebellion was on the side of peace. His famous message to Sir John A. Macdonald which the Prime Minister received and read aloud in the Canadian House of Commons, and which produced such enthusiastic cheers from the members, probably expressed Crowfoot's real opinions:

BLACKFOOT CROSSING,  
11th April 1885.

On behalf of myself and people I wish to send through you to the Great Mother the words I have given to the Governor at a Council held, at which my minor chiefs and young men were present. We are agreed and determined to remain loyal to the Queen. Our young men will go to work on their reserve, and will raise all the crops we can, and we hope the Government will help us to sell what we cannot use.

Continued reports are brought to us, and we do not know what to believe, but now that we have seen the Governor and heard him speak, we will shut our ears and only listen to and believe what is told us through the Governor.

Should any Indians come to our reserves and ask us to join them in war we will send them away. I have sent messengers to the Bloods and Piegiens who belong to our treaty to tell them what we are doing, and what we intend to do about the trouble. I want Mr. Dewdney to be with us and all my men are of the same mind. The words I sent by Father Lacombe I again send. We will be loyal to the Queen whatever happens. I have a copy of this, and when the trouble is over will have it with pride to show to the Queen's officers, and we leave our future in your hands.

We have asked for nothing, but the Governor has given us a little

present of tea and tobacco. He will tell you what other talk we had at our Council; it was all good, not one bad word.<sup>1</sup>

Crowfoot was ably assisted in this policy by Father Lacombe, who was already growing old in the service of the Indians of Southern Alberta. Lastly, the complete confidence which the Indians had in the Police, and the innumerable acts of justice and kindness they could remember at the hands of the Force, constituted another influence making for stability. Riel's blandishments failed to move the Blackfoot confederation, and nothing happened in the south while the rebellion was being crushed. It has often been assumed that nothing could have happened, but this is far from the truth. For weeks the slightest mistake, an act of undue severity on the part of the Police, an indication of weakness, a casual quarrel between an Indian and a settler, a temporary success won by the rebels, any or all of these things and innumerable other unimportant occurrences might have brought the Blackfeet out on the war-path. This however, did not happen, thanks to the sagacious leading of Crowfoot, the wise counsel of Father Lacombe and the careful management of the Police. In many ways this was one of the greatest victories of the Force, and the fact that it was a negative triumph won by silent, unostentatious work, does not detract from its value.

It now remains to trace briefly the course of Indian development and progress from 1877 to 1905. As early as 1879 the Dominion Government found it necessary to issue rations regularly to the Indians of Treaty Number Seven. In that year also, a herd of a thousand head of cattle was established on the Indian farm near Pincher Creek to supply the Indian needs. In the year 1882-3 many of the natives saw that the buffalo was definitely gone, and settled down on the Reserves and tried to accustom themselves to their new lives. Good crops were produced in 1882 on all the Reserves except that

<sup>1</sup> Pope, Sir J., *Correspondence of Sir John A. Macdonald*, p. 343.

of the Stonies, where they were destroyed by early frosts. The Bloods raised two hundred thousand pounds of potatoes, besides turnips, barley and oats. The Blackfeet also did surprisingly well, and the Piegan were not only able to turn over a large quantity of potatoes to the agent for seed, but over and above their own requirements they had enough to sell more than a thousand dollars' worth to the settlers.

For several years after this however, the Indians showed no signs of progress, and indeed, seemed to be falling back to their old ways. At least four reasons may be suggested which account for this retrogression. The unnecessary cutting down of Government rations because the Indians were supposed to be practically self-supporting, probably discouraged them from continued effort. The inevitable unsettlement consequent upon the outbreak of the rebellion also had its bad effects. Then again, after 1883 there occurred a series of dry seasons, which led the Indians to believe that good crops were impossible. Lastly, in the light of more recent experience, it seems that these people were not yet ready for settled agricultural life, and it was not until they turned their main energies to stock-raising that they began to prosper.

It was to be expected that from time to time, the Indians would grow weary of the restraints imposed upon them by their life in the Reserve. This was particularly true of the young men. Thus for example, early in 1887 a body of young Bloods, now in particularly good form after the severe winter which, by destroying so many thousands of cattle, had ensured a more than usually abundant supply of meat for them, made a dash from their reserve towards Medicine Hat. Horses were stolen, cattle were killed, and the Indians thoroughly enjoyed themselves until they were stopped by the Mounted Police. In view of this escapade, the Commissioner recommended in his next report that in future the Indians should only be allowed to leave their Reserves on pass,

and then only for some good reason. In a later report he suggested that some arrangement should be arrived at with them, by which they would be induced to give up their rifles. Bands of well-armed savages wandering about a settled country full of cattle were certain to make trouble. Many a woman whose men-folk were temporarily absent was terrified by the visit of a number of Indians demanding food.<sup>1</sup> In 1888, the Mounted Police Report announced that the Indians of the south-west were lagging far behind their fellow-countrymen to the east and north, who were making rapid strides towards self-support. With the exception of the Piegan and the Stonies, who were comparatively quiet, constant Police patrols were necessary to prevent the Indians from giving trouble.<sup>2</sup>

Two years later a change for the better was at last reported. The Sarsi, it is true, were once more at their old game of killing cattle on a large scale, but both this tribe and the Bloods were beginning to put up hay for sale. Indeed, from the beginning of the 'nineties, under the wise management of the Indian Department, the natives were encouraged to make money for themselves, and once they realised what a difference the possession of money made to them their progress became steady. "My experience of Indians has proved to me that, like white men, the handling of cash for their labour is the greatest incentive to renewed toil."<sup>3</sup> An indication of the change which had come over the natives by this time is afforded by the fact that they were used as guides and scouts by the Police. At first they were not altogether satisfactory; the slightest reprimand would drive them away, and they were continually wanting to visit their families. They soon tired of the work and could not be relied upon. As they grew accustomed to it however, they

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1893, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1888, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1890, p. 3.

became very much more useful. In the famous charcoal case Indian guides were invaluable, and before the end of the century the Commissioner recommended the creation of a body of Indian Police who would be largely responsible for the Reserves.

As they grew in wealth they discarded their blankets, and by 1895 many of them were already wearing European clothes. The old tepees were fast yielding place to log huts and even brick houses. Chief Red Crow of the Bloods had his house carpeted throughout and furnished with up-to-date bedsteads and washing utensils. Each year more and more of the Treaty money went to the purchase of mowers, hay-rakes, other agricultural implements, and domestic articles such as sewing-machines. The Indians began to put up a large amount of hay for themselves and did a good deal of haymaking for the Mounted Police and the ranchers. They were so successful in this activity, that the Commissioner states in one of his reports that he preferred to procure his hay from the Indians, as it was always good and they were much less difficult to deal with than the white farmers. The Blackfeet began to mine coal in considerable quantities on their Reserve, and for this they found a ready market. The Bloods, with their four-horse teams, hauled most of the coal used by the Police at Macleod.

Stock-raising however, became the most highly developed industry of any among these Indians. By character they were much better suited for the pastoral than for a purely agricultural life. With their growing prosperity the temptation to steal horses and kill cattle tended to decline. They accumulated large herds of stock of their own, and in 1898 the Commissioner of Police stated that their steers were as good as any in the country and annually increasing. In 1900 one Blackfoot alone owned five hundred cattle, and in 1904 the Blackfeet and Stonies together owned eight thousand

seven hundred and eight head of cattle, and the whole of their live-stock was valued at two hundred and sixty-eight thousand nine hundred and forty-four dollars.<sup>1</sup> For years the Indians owned some of the poorest horses in the country. When the Klondyke rush began however, they got rid of many of their poorest ponies at prices ranging between ten and forty dollars. After that they improved their horse herds by purchasing superior animals.

When the Crow's Nest line was constructed, the Indians did much of the freighting. They supplied most of the hay to the contractors, and when the line was completed found a new market for this commodity in the Kootenay.

By 1905 then, these Indians showed many signs of progress. Their herds of cattle were flourishing, their horses were improving in quality, and they were beginning to make a success of agriculture. Many of them were earning good wages as haymakers or as agricultural workers on the farms of the south. The least progressive of all these Indians were the Sarsi, who unfortunately, lived too close to Calgary. They were constantly getting drunk and causing trouble to the Police. The Stonies were progressing but very slowly. They were still wanderers like their forefathers, and were seldom to be found on their Reserve. As hunters they were unequalled, and indeed they were so active in this pursuit that many complaints of their inroads upon the big game of the mountains had been received by the Police. They alone among the tribes of the south were increasing in numbers, which the Police attributed to the fact that they still lived their natural life. The Piegan, Bloods and Blackfeet were by now prosperous, and had already travelled far upon the path of civilisation.

When it is remembered that a quarter of a century before these prosperous farmers and stockmen were complete

<sup>1</sup> Laird, *Our Indian Treaties*, p. 10.

savages, the change can only be described as remarkable. Indian agents and their assistants had done their work well, though often their untiring labour must have seemed futile. Missionaries also, such as Father Lacombe, Archdeacon Tims and John McDougall, had stood by the Indians in all their troubles and helped them with words of encouragement and sound advice. But still the great question was unanswered—would the Indians die out?

In the last quarter of a century they had developed in a wonderful manner, but year by year their numbers had declined. In 1905 no one could say definitely whether this process was destined to continue until they were no more, or whether it could be arrested. Compared with aboriginal peoples in many parts of the world, the Indians of Southern Alberta were fortunate. They all had splendid Reserves, the country was vast and still sparsely populated, and with all its limitations the new life allowed them a great deal of freedom. It remains for the people of Alberta to show the Indians who survive, the same consideration that they received in the pioneer period, and if this is done it should surely be possible for these people to adjust themselves to the strenuous conditions of the modern life.

## CHAPTER IX

### TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

It has already been seen that the Blackfeet did not understand the use of the canoe. Indeed, this was one of the reasons urged by their chief against Hendry's proposal that some of his young men should go down to the bay to trade. Before their acquisition of the horse, all their carrying was done by women and dogs. Cocking states that the Blackfeet women were fortunate in comparison with those of other tribes, since by his time, 1772, they used horses instead of being pack animals themselves. It was not until early in the nineteenth century that use of this animal became general among the other plains Indians. The horses were hitched to travoys by buffalo hide harness. These sleds were merely two or three parallel poles, with a number of cross-pieces bound together by buffalo sinews. The women placed the baggage on these travoys and were responsible for the whole business of transport.

As far as white men were concerned, the Bow River was used to a certain extent by the traders as a canoe route, certainly as far up as Chesterfield House, near the mouth of the Red Deer River. Thompson in 1800 sent some of his men down this latter stream to the South Saskatchewan, while Fidler and John Macdonald of Garth came up the Bow some considerable distance. But while this river was used from time to time by the fur-traders, it never carried any traffic comparable with that which passed up and down



the North Saskatchewan. When Bow Fort was established, there was apparently no intention of using the river for canoes. The goods required at the new post were brought overland from the North Saskatchewan, and the furs taken in exchange were sent back by the same trail and down that river in the usual way.

From Thompson's time onwards explorers and traders in the plains area frequently travelled and carried their goods on horseback. As however, Southern Alberta was practically untouched by white men before the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the question of transport did not arise. Its real history in this area therefore begins with the appearance of the American fur-traders in the 'sixties. The establishment of a number of posts in British territory as far north as the Elbow River, gave rise to a good deal of freighting. For years the bulk of this work was done by a form of transport peculiar to the arid or semi-arid country stretching north to the Bow River from the Rio Grande. This was the bull-train.

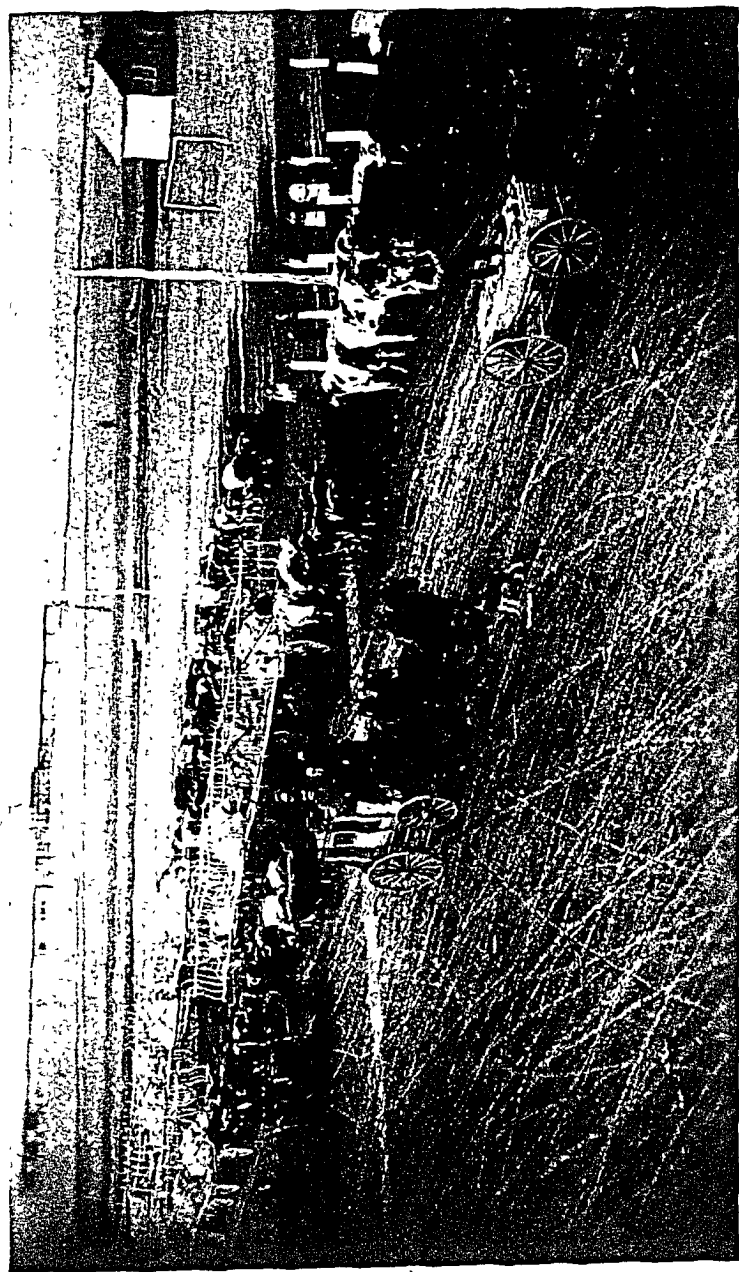
In Canada bull-trains were used from the Bow River south to the 49th parallel, and from the Cypress Hills to the Rocky Mountains, though not to any extent west of what was later to be known as the Macleod trail. They never became general east of the Cypress Hills, or north of the present main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. This form of transport required dry, firm ground and when rivers were to be forded, solid stream beds. At the time of the rising in 1885, an attempt was made to use them in the country north of Calgary, but, owing to the soft nature of the ground, bull teams were found to be wholly unsatisfactory and they were abandoned for Red River carts and wagons. Under normal conditions in the country which they were designed to serve, bull-trains could be kept running for seven or eight months each year. The only things which hindered them were heavy

snowfalls, rainy seasons, or prairie fires which destroyed the pasture.

A bull-train was made up of a number of teams. Each team might consist of six, eight, ten or even fifteen yoke of oxen. A team was expected to draw three wagons, the lead, the swing and the trail, coupled like railway trucks, together with a cart carrying the cooking utensils, blankets and a tent.<sup>1</sup> The oxen were generally broken in as four-year-olds. They were used for several years after which, if possible, though this was not always the case, they were sold for beef. These animals, particularly the leading pair, were often intelligent and remarkably well trained. Almost everything depended upon the leaders, and a good driver could control them in a most surprising way by the mere crack of his whip or the spoken word. The vocabulary of these drivers was rather vituperative, and milder language apparently was quite useless. On one occasion a driver, accompanied by a missionary, was unable to extricate his team from a mud-hole, owing to the fact that his style was cramped by the presence of his companion. Having vainly expostulated with his team in a language and tone that was wholly new to them, and the whip having proved equally useless, he asked his passenger to choose between the physical inconvenience of an extra night or so on the trail and the aesthetic pain of listening to his stream of pent-up expletives. This particular padre wisely chose the latter course, for prairie oxen responded only to abusive language.

The wagons were specially built for the purpose. They were very strong, and in order to make them more stable on steep hillsides than ordinary wagons, they had a gauge of six feet. They were covered with canvas, stretched over bows which were attached to the wagon box. The freight could thus be protected from rain and sun if need be, and excellent

<sup>1</sup> Pearce MS. p. 170.



ON THE ROAD TO CALGARY FROM LETHBRIDGE  
Bull Teams and Macleod Stage taken at Lethbridge, N.W.T., 1886



shelter was provided for the men.<sup>1</sup> One bull-team carried a load which varied from fifteen to twenty-one tons, according to the number of oxen employed. This load was distributed so that the greatest burden was carried in the lead wagon and the lightest in the trail, sixty per cent in the former, twenty-five in the swing, and fifteen in the last.

The harness of the bull-team was simplicity itself. Each pair of oxen was fitted with a strong yoke, which had an iron ring on the top of it, midway between the two animals. Through this ring, and fastened to it, a chain ran from the leaders back to the lead wagon, and, besides his voice and whip, the driver had no other method of controlling his team.

When mules or horses were used, the term "string-team" was applied. These moved rather faster than bull-teams, sometimes reaching the high rate of fifteen miles a day, as against eight or ten, which was a good average for oxen. String-teams however, carried much less freight, never more than fifteen tons. They were used largely in British Columbia, but never became general in Alberta. The driver of a bull-team was known by the suggestive name of bull whacker, while the string-team was driven by a gentleman with the equally significant appellation of mule skinner. In addition to these functionaries, as it was customary for several teams to travel in what was known as a train, there was usually a foreman, known as a wagon boss, and also a night herder and a cook. The bull whacker accompanied his team on foot, while the mule skinner usually rode the near wheeler and controlled his team by a jerk line, attached to the bit of the near leader in the lead pair, then by the aid of a jockey stick to the bit of the off-leader.

The progress of the bull-teams was slow, dusty and very noisy, and the sound of the groaning wagons, the shouts of the drivers and the cracking of their long whips could be

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171.

heard for miles on the open prairie. While, as has been stated, the average speed of one of these teams per day might be from eight to ten miles, it was frequently very much less. For example, Major Walker on one occasion was informed at Macleod that his mail had been dispatched to Calgary by bull-team a fortnight earlier. He overtook the bull-team at High River, about forty miles from Calgary, and the driver estimated that with good luck, provided there were no serious accidents and the weather continued to be favourable, he would reach his destination in another ten days.

Heavy rains might hold up a bull-train for days or even weeks. When a marshy place on the trail or a difficult riverbed was to be crossed, it was usual to unhitch the team, drive the animals to the other side, and then attach them by a long chain to the wagons, which were then drawn over one at a time. On steep hillsides it was frequently necessary to couple two or three teams together, in order to drag up the heavily laden wagons. Even if the trail was good, the crew had to be ready for a variety of emergencies. A wheel might come off, a coupling or a chain break, the animals get hurt in some way, or a hundred and one other things might happen calculated to prevent further progress. On one occasion a train belonging to Healy and Hamilton lost most of its strength in the course of a single night, owing to the fact that the oxen wandered away with a passing herd of buffalo. Considering the possibilities of disaster, it is remarkable that any bull-train ever reached the destination for which it started. But reach it they undoubtedly did, and for several years the life of Macleod, Calgary and other places in the Bow River district depended upon these noisy emissaries of civilisation. The last bull-team from Benton to Macleod made that journey in 1885.

Strung out on the prairie, these trains which might con-

tain seven, eight or even more teams, must have provided an imposing spectacle. A traveller who encountered one by accident, describes it thus: "We were approaching Fort Whoop-up from the east and it was toward evening as we topped a small rise and looked down upon the plain beneath us. Some distance away, it must have been at least five miles, we could hear the sound of voices, ever and anon raised in a hoarse shout. At first we could see nothing. Then from behind a large coppice or clump of trees we saw emerge some toiling, plodding oxen. We could see them plainly through our field-glasses, swinging along in that peculiar gait of the bovine. As they walked, the dust drifted from their plodding hoofs in little clouds. Team after team came into view, until there was nearly half a mile of them stretched out. A man on horseback rode up and down the line. The sun was nearing the horizon and we stood and watched them until the plodding, swaying oxen, dragging their wagons behind them, were lost in the haze of the autumn sun."<sup>1</sup>

The importance of establishing an all-British route across North America was fully realised, both in Canada and in Great Britain, before the middle of the nineteenth century. Among the many schemes put forward from time to time, it was suggested that the Saskatchewan River was suitable for steamboats. This river had long been used as far as the Forks by the fur-traders' brigades. The North Branch, as far as the Rocky Mountain House, had become the regular route for travellers to and from the far north and west, but the South Branch was almost completely neglected. The discovery of gold in British Columbia stimulated the interest in the proposed overland route. Hind reported favourably on the possibility of using the South Saskatchewan for river steamers, and put forward a very daring scheme for its development. He recommended that the South Branch should be dammed

<sup>1</sup> *Calgary Daily Herald*, Oct. 13, 1923.

just below Qu'Appelle, that its water should be deflected into the valley of that river and so to the Assiniboine and Red River. This he thought, could be done with very little difficulty and at a moderate cost. If carried out, it would lead to the creation of a magnificent river highway stretching from the Red River settlement to the foot of the Rocky Mountains. Dawson however, considered this scheme quite impossible, and declared that it would merely result in flooding out Fort Garry."

Twenty years later, Macoun returned to the idea of using the South Saskatchewan. "I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing to prevent all the supplies wanted for the south-west being sent up the South Saskatchewan. Coal is abundant in the river-banks at the Blackfoot Crossing and farther eastward, so that there will be no difficulty as to fuel for steamers. Should an attempt be made to navigate the river, it will be found to have better water for a longer period of the year than the North Saskatchewan."<sup>1</sup>

Steam navigation on the Saskatchewan first started in 1871, under the management of the Hudson's Bay Company. Sanford Fleming stated that this river was navigable from Grand Rapids at its mouth to Edmonton, and in 1875 the Hudson's Bay Company's steamer *Northcote* made its first journey from Fort Garry to that place. Down to 1881 there was only one boat of any size on the river, and until 1880 it only carried the goods of the Hudson's Bay Company. In that year however, the Company opened a general transport business and began to carry freight for other traders and settlers. In comparison with railway charges, the rates were very high:

PASSENGER.		
	Cabin.	Deck.
Lower Fort Garry to Victoria, Fort Saskatchewan and Edmonton . . . . .	\$70.00	\$35.00

<sup>1</sup> Macoun, *Manitoba and the Great North-West*, p. 587.



	FREIGHT.	Rates per pound.
Victoria	.	5½ cents.
Fort Saskatchewan	.	6½ "
Edmonton	.	6½ "

The Company spent large sums of money in the improvement of the river channel, and received supplementary grants from the Dominion Government to help in this work. In 1881 the Winnipeg Transport Company took over the Hudson's Bay Company's steamers, and ran six boats on the Saskatchewan from the Grand Rapids to Edmonton on the North Branch, and to Blackfoot Crossing on the South Branch.

The North-West Coal and Navigation Company attempted to use steamers and barges on the Belly River for the transport of their coal. Three boats, the *Baroness*, constructed out of local timber, the *Alberta* and the *Minnow*, were placed on this river, together with a number of barges. These steamers made several journeys between Medicine Hat and Coalbanks or Lethbridge during the summer of 1884. In a moment of ebullient optimism the company advertised in the *Macleod Gazette* that it was prepared to carry freight from Medicine Hat to Macleod. I. G. Baker & Company at once secured all the available capacity of the first steamer to make the journey, at the rate of eighty cents per hundredweight. By dint of herculean labour, the steamer finally managed to reach the Little Bow, but beyond that place it was impossible to proceed. It was discovered that these boats could only be run successfully during high water, at which time they were unable to produce enough power to propel them up-stream. This venture thus proved a fiasco, and with this Gilbertian episode the chequered career of Southern Alberta's merchant services terminated.<sup>2</sup>

But while proposals for the development of a navigable

<sup>1</sup> Diller, *The Early Economic Development of Alberta (previous to 1905)*, chap. xiv. p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Pearce MS. chap. vi.

waterway across the prairie were considered, the idea of an all-British transcontinental railway was never altogether forgotten from the 'thirties of the nineteenth century. As early as 1834, Thomas Dalton predicted that "the teas and silks of China would be transported directly from the shores of the Pacific to Toronto by canal, by river, by railroad and by steam".<sup>1</sup> Sir R. Bonnycastle mooted it again in 1846, and in 1847 Lieutenant Synge advocated such a project. Major Carmichael Smythe in 1848 suggested that the British convicts, now that the Antipodes were being closed against them, should be employed in this work on the Pacific side.<sup>2</sup>

Bills were introduced into the Canadian Parliament in 1851, 1853 and 1855, for the chartering of a railway company which would construct a line from Lake Superior to the Pacific. Thanks largely to the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company however, these bills were thrown out. In 1858 a body known as the North-West Transportation, Navigation and Railway Company, actually received its charter, but apparently did nothing. This company proposed to build a transcontinental route which would be partly wagon road, later to be replaced by railway, and partly water-way.<sup>3</sup>

Palliser reported against the construction of a road between Lake Superior and Red River Colony, largely because of the enormous expense involved, relative to the advantages which might be expected. He says: "The knowledge of the country on the whole would never lead me to advocate a line of communication from Canada, across the continent to the Pacific, exclusively through British territory. The time has now forever gone by for effecting such an object, and the unfortunate choice of an astronomical boundary line, has completely isolated the Central American possessions of Great Britain from Canada in the east, and also almost debarred

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* chap. xxi. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 140.

them from any eligible access from the Pacific Coast on the west."<sup>1</sup>

The British Government was interested in the project of a route across North America mainly for military reasons. In 1858 a plan was submitted to Lord Stanley for the incorporation of a company, the main business of which would be to open up a line of communication between Canada and the settlements on the Red River. It is interesting to observe that it was suggested that this company should be assisted by the Government to the extent of a grant of forty million acres of land, in the neighbourhood of the Saskatchewan River. The subject again came up in 1865, and in the following year Sir Edmund Head was asked to state under what conditions, if any, the Hudson's Bay Company would be prepared to dispose of its cultivable territory to a group of Anglo-American capitalists, who were willing and anxious to colonise and settle that region. Owing to the fact that the whole question of the Hudson's Bay territory was then under consideration by the British and Canadian Governments, the Company was unable to discuss the subject, though apparently it was willing to consider the desirability of the proposal.<sup>2</sup> Thus this project was not brought into the sphere of practical politics until after confederation.

British Columbia entered the Dominion on July 20, 1871, on the express understanding that within two years the construction of a transcontinental railway should be begun, and completed within ten years from the date of the Union.<sup>3</sup> This is not the place to recount the story of the bitter political struggle that raged over the Pacific Railway scheme. Down to 1880, the prevailing view in Eastern Canada was that the project was too big for any private company to undertake.

<sup>1</sup> Palliser Report, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Begg, *The Great Canadian North-West*, pp. 45-6.

<sup>3</sup> Order in Council, July 20, 1871; Pearce MS. chap. ii. p. 4.

The result was that, with the exception of a great deal of survey work, very little actual construction was done, much to the disgust of the people of British Columbia. Great uncertainty prevailed on the subject of the actual route which the line was to follow. Many, including Sandford Fleming, preferred a northerly route similar to that of the present Canadian National, which would make possible the utilisation of the North Saskatchewan, and across the mountains by the Yellowhead Pass. It was held that such a route would open up the most valuable land in the north-west, and by escaping the so-called desert country in the south, would be cheaper to construct and bring more speedy returns.

The champions of the southerly route urged, on the contrary, that a line which was closer to the American frontier would tap areas which were already being settled, and that the desert land of the south was a figment of certain explorers' imaginations. Moreover, the southerly route would deflect trade that otherwise would be captured by United States' lines, and they were able to show that already, owing to the absence of any adequate Canadian transport system, much Canadian trade had been captured by enterprising Americans. Prior to the coming of the Canadian Pacific Railway all the trade of Southern Alberta went to Fort Benton and the Missouri, and it is improbable that the existence of a Canadian railway over two hundred and fifty miles north of Macleod, would have attracted the ranchers and settlers of the south. Again, the champions of the southern route argued that not only could the Canadian railway thus secure all the trade in the southern part of the territories, but it would also have all the trade of the north, since there would be no alternative left to the people of that region. As it turned out, the Canadian Pacific Railway was obliged to expend large sums in order to recapture the trade of the south. It has been estimated that, if the northerly route had been chosen, the

Canadian Pacific Railway would have lost at least 75 per cent of the trade of the south. It would then only have been served by branch lines, which could not in any case be expected to be in running order for years to come. The experts also urged in favour of the southerly route, the greater availability of coal, and the relative nearness of this commodity to the more thickly populated districts of Manitoba.<sup>1</sup> Had it not been for the condition imposed by the Canadian Government, that the railway must be at least a hundred miles north from the American frontier, it would have probably been constructed still further to the south.

After a great deal of discussion, entailing the expenditure of floods of eloquence and oceans of ink, an agreement was finally reached between the Dominion Government and a body known as the Syndicate. This group of financiers undertook to construct and put in running order the eastern and central sections of the line by May 1891, while the Government was to complete the western sections between Yale and Port Moody not later than May 1, 1891.<sup>2</sup> This agreement was ratified by the Dominion Parliament on February 15, 1881, and the new company soon showed that it was fully capable of carrying out its undertakings. The Dominion Government followed the example of the United States, by assisting the undertaking by money subsidies and land grants. Twenty-five million acres of land, to be selected in the territory between Winnipeg and the Rocky Mountains, were given to the Company, which also received a free gift of all land required for the road-bed, for stations and water-frontage.

Active operations were begun in June 1881, and thereafter the work was carried on at a rate that surprised the whole world. "One word, lastly, on the wonderful railroad which is knitting together the broad continent, . . . a railroad where

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* chap. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Diller, *The Early Economic Development of Alberta*, chap. iv. p. 16.

an army of fifteen thousand men is employed, under the command of, I might say, a general; and where the average rate of progress—of good work too, steel rail and solid work—is not less than three miles a day. I do not believe that the work lately done in Canada has been equalled in the history of railway construction in any part of the world, even in the United States. On one occasion I was told that not less than five miles of railway were perfectly laid in a single twenty-four hours.”<sup>1</sup> By the end of 1882, the track had been laid to a point just east of Medicine Hat. On June 14, 1883, it crossed the Saskatchewan at that place, and reached Calgary, a hundred and eighty-six miles west, on August 10. Thus the line was built across Alberta at the rate of slightly over three miles a day. In 1884, the Syndicate approached the Dominion Government for an additional loan of twenty-two million five hundred thousand dollars. Although the Grand Trunk interests opposed this request in Parliament, because they asserted that the Canadian Pacific Railway had paralleled some of their lines in Eastern Canada, the loan was nevertheless granted. By 1885 the railway was in full working order as far as Calgary, and on November 7 of that year Lord Strathcona drove in the last spike at Craigellachie, British Columbia, and the work was complete.

It is only natural that a note of jubilation is to be found in the Canadian Pacific Railway Annual Reports for 1885 and 1886. After fifty-three months of arduous labour, “some anxiety and much unfair and undeserved hostility, the work was completed”.<sup>2</sup> In this remarkably short space of time, the Company had not only built two thousand four hundred miles of railway, but had actually put much of it into operation. It should be remembered also that some of the sections of this line, notably those north of Lake Superior and in the

<sup>1</sup> Carnarvon, Earl of, *Speeches on Canadian Affairs*, pp. 304-5.

<sup>2</sup> C.P.R. Annual Report, 1885.

Rocky Mountains, were among the most difficult pieces of railway construction ever undertaken up to that time. Moreover, the line had been built in one-half of the time agreed upon, a feat which is surely unique in undertakings of this magnitude.

During the construction of the line the Mounted Police rendered notable services to the Company. Thanks largely to them the motley collection of navvies were kept in order, and except for one or two noisy outbursts there were no serious breaches of the law. Occasionally it is true, the Indians manifested marked antipathy to this latest and most incomprehensible innovation of the white man. Pie-a-Pot and his braves, apparently in order to register their disapproval, but more probably to amuse themselves by terrifying the navvies, encamped on the line of construction and held up operations. The arrival of a mounted policeman however, invariably terminated such demonstrations, though on one occasion at least, the representatives of the law found it necessary to kick down the chief's tepee before the latter learnt his lesson. Under date of January 1, 1883, the General Manager of the Company wrote to Colonel Irvine to thank him and the force under his command for their valuable services. "By preventing the traffic in liquor and preserving order in the construction camps along the line, the Mounted Police had done much to make the successful prosecution of the work possible." In no great work within my knowledge, where so many men have been employed, has such perfect order prevailed,<sup>1</sup> and a year later the Company once more acknowledged its indebtedness to the Police Force in even more enthusiastic and grateful terms.

It is almost impossible to overestimate the importance of the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the history of Southern Alberta. Before the railway arrived, the

<sup>1</sup> Haydon, *Riders of the Plains*, p. 101.

country was so inaccessible, that to develop it was impossible. Canoes, Red River carts and bull-teams at best could only carry a comparatively small amount of goods. The railway at once provided a ready access to the country from all parts of the world, and it passed at one stride from an almost useless wilderness to a valuable field of investment and development. The ranchers of Southern Alberta now had an opportunity of sharing the trade of the world; and the great expansion of their industry which followed upon the completion of the railway is a measure of its importance to them.

At the same time it is true that, in some respects, the rapid development of the country was handicapped by the land subsidy policy adopted by the Government. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company was granted all odd-numbered sections in a twenty-four-mile belt along its main line and branches, and also in the Red Deer, Saskatchewan and Battle River districts. In 1884, three hundred thousand acres of land were given to the Alberta Railway Coal and Navigation Company, and in 1890 one million nine hundred thousand acres were handed over to the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Company. The odd-numbered sections in the Territories were reserved in order to allow the railway companies to select at their pleasure, but as the companies were able to finance their work by land grant bonds, which were issued on the security of the land, they were naturally in no hurry to get rid of it.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Canadian Pacific Railway repeatedly announced in its Annual Reports, that it proposed to retain its land until free Dominion land had been disposed of, and its market value had increased in consequence. Thus in many instances, the Company did not specify its selections for twenty or more years after the original grants had been made.

This was undoubtedly unfavourable to the general interest

<sup>1</sup> Diller, *The Early Economic Development of Alberta*, chap. vi. pp. 4-5.



of the country. Unoccupied odd sections were naturally a barrier to settlement. The organisation of school districts or of rural institutions were thus retarded, and large spaces of open prairie naturally increased the danger from prairie fires. What is true of rural districts was even truer of urban centres. "The existence of railway lines, exempt from taxation and held always at a price in advance of their actual value, presents almost the only obstacle to rapid settlement of the Territories."<sup>1</sup>

But while it is true that the land subsidy system of the Government may thus have hindered the rapid development of the country, it is difficult to see how any other policy was possible. The country was empty, land was cheap and undoubtedly would remain so unless a railway was constructed. The building of a railway moreover, especially of this magnitude, is a very expensive undertaking. Unless special attractions had been held out, no financier in his senses would have considered such a project for a moment. Thus, whatever the disadvantages connected with the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway were, they were far outweighed by the advantages. They should be thought of as the inevitable afflictions of a young country, just as inevitable in their way as chicken-pox and measles in the case of the human infant. Without the Canadian Pacific Railway there would be no Alberta. In some respects this question of waste lands in Western Canada resembles the problem of clergy reserves, which was such a vexed question in Eastern Canada during the first half of the nineteenth century. Most of the objections to the system of clergy reserves were valid arguments against land appropriations for railways, except that the latter could not be spiced with sectarian bias. Private citizens who felt aggrieved could not

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report of the Dominion Land Agent at Edmonton to Department of Interior, 1897, quoted Diller, *op. cit.* chap. vi. p. 5.

work up the same amount of rancour against a railway corporation that was possible against Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Anglicans or Presbyterians, as the case might be.

Besides the main line of the Canadian Pacific, the only other railway built in Southern Alberta in the 'eighties was the narrow-gauge line from Dunmore to Coalbanks. This was constructed in 1885 by the North-Western Coal and Navigation Company, after the disastrous experiment made by them in the sphere of shipping. This line was designed to bring coal from the Company's mines to the Canadian Pacific Railway, and, according to the Annual C.P.R. Reports of the next year or so, these mines were already supplying the wants of much of the north-west.

In 1890, the construction of the Calgary and Edmonton line was authorised, and ninety-three miles of track-laid during that year. By September 1892 it was completed and put into operation. During the same year work was started on the line running south to Macleod, and this was finally completed in 1893. The building of the Crow's Nest line from Dunmore to Kootenay Lake in British Columbia was however, the most important railway undertaking of the 'nineties. In its annual report for 1891, the Company announced its intention of beginning grading work west of Macleod towards the Crow's Nest Pass. But for several years this was not carried out, as the Canadian Government and the Company could not come to any satisfactory agreement as to the requisite amount of public money to be voted by Parliament for this purpose. It was finally agreed that the Dominion Government should assist the work to the extent of a subsidy of eleven thousand dollars a mile, while the Canadian Pacific Railway was to bear all other charges.<sup>1</sup> Work began in 1897, and the line was carried that year to within twelve miles of the summit of Crow's Nest Pass. It

<sup>1</sup> C.P.R. Report, 1897.

was completed in 1898, after which thriving towns and villages quickly sprang up in South Kootenay, in addition to many mining and lumber camps. This meant new markets for Alberta's live stock.

In the meantime the Alberta Railway and Coal Company, which had absorbed the North-Western Coal and Navigation Company, had extended its narrow gauge from Lethbridge to Great Falls, Montana. Later, various branch lines were constructed in order to develop the farming country south of Lethbridge. All these lines were narrow gauge at first, but by 1906 they had all been standardised.

Thompson describes what was known among the fur-traders as the Indian post, which appears to have been a fairly sure, if not particularly rapid, method of postal delivery. A trader would give his letter to an Indian, telling him for whom it was intended. The Indian would carry the letter and dispose of it to another, who would take it a little further on its way and, for a consideration, pass it on to someone else, and so the process would be repeated and the letter passed from hand to hand until ultimately it reached its destination. Apparently, in British Columbia in Thompson's time such letters rarely failed to reach the person for whom they were intended. In Southern Alberta the first postal service was from Fort Macleod to Fort Benton. The mail was made up in the Mounted Police Barracks and the letters stamped with American stamps and carried by messenger under contract with the Police to Fort Benton.<sup>1</sup> In the winter time, when navigation on the Missouri had ceased, this mail was carried by stage from Fort Benton to Helena and south to Corrin, to reach the Utah northern branch of the Union Pacific Railway. Communication between the various Mounted Police forts was maintained by Police messengers as occasion demanded. On January 1,

<sup>1</sup> Pearce MS. p. 103.

1884, a weekly mail was established between Calgary and Fort Macleod, which continued to run until the completion of the railway in 1893. A similar service was maintained with Edmonton from 1884 to 1891. On June 30 of the former year, a fortnightly mail service was established between Medicine Hat and Macleod, and after the completion of the railway to Lethbridge in 1885, it was continued from that place. From 1883 to 1898, a fortnightly mail service was maintained between Macleod and Pincher Creek.

In 1864, Dr. Poe traversed the Territories with a view to the establishment of a telegraph line through British North America. The only thing that ever came of this scheme was that the Hudson's Bay Company bought tons of wire which it stored away and sold many years later, when the Government telegraph lines were being constructed after the transfer of the Territories to Canada. In the late 'seventies a telegraph line was extended several hundred miles west from Winnipeg. It is said that for years this line ended at no place in particular in the open prairie. Telegrams of ten words from Winnipeg to the end of the wire cost two and a half dollars, but an additional charge of ten dollars was made on all messages proceeding from that point to Edmonton. In 1885, the Government laid a telegraph line from Dunmore to Lethbridge, which was later extended to Macleod and Pincher Creek. The rest of the telegraph lines in Southern Alberta came with the railway. As early as 1885 the Canadian Pacific Railway announced in its Annual Report that "the Company's telegraph lines have . . . only been open for commercial service between Lake Superior and the Rocky Mountains and on the branch lines of railway in the north-west. . . . The Company's wires, both east and west, are being rapidly extended, and it is expected that its telegraph system will soon be in full operation."

## CHAPTER X

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE RANCHING INDUSTRY

THE first cattle on the Canadian prairies were brought to the country by the North-West Company and sold to the Red River settlers early in the nineteenth century. Shortly after this, another band of about three hundred was driven across the boundary line from the United States, and in 1825 still another herd arrived. As a result of inbreeding, these cattle rapidly deteriorated in size and quality, and the attempts made by their owners to winter them on the open prairie proved, owing to the rigours of the Manitoba climate, disastrous. During the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century the number of domestic cattle in the Red River settlements slowly increased, while a few cows were to be found at many of the trading posts. It is interesting to notice that it was not until 1866 that cattle wintered out on the United States northern ranges.<sup>1</sup> The total number of cattle in the country down to the late 'seventies was very small, and indeed, even after the Police had come it was believed that a man who was established at the Forks of the Red Deer and Saskatchewan with five hundred head, would easily be able to supply all future needs.

On November 20, 1871, the McDougall brothers arrived at Morleyville with a band of fifty horses and cattle, and were thus the first to bring domestic stock to the neighbourhood of the Canadian ranges. In the following year the

<sup>1</sup> Morison, S. E., *History of the United States*, vol. ii. p. 354.

same enterprising brothers drove one hundred head from Montaña to Morleyville, and so enjoy the credit of being the first to bring in range cattle to Alberta.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, this herd was not turned loose on the range, since the buffalo bulls would have speedily disposed of any bulls among the newcomers, and the cows would have been swept away in the herds of bison. In any case, with the whisky-traders plying their iniquitous trade and the Indians under no effective control, maddened by alcohol and armed with repeating rifles, no man's property nor even indeed his life was any too secure.

In 1875, when it was generally known that the Police had established law and order, a herd of dairy cattle was driven over the frontier from Montana by Henry Olsen and Joe Macfarlane, and established a few miles below Macleod.<sup>2</sup> These two pioneer dairymen found a ready market for their products at the Fort, and as they received seventy-five cents a pound for their butter, and even at that price were unable to meet all the demand, their enterprise was amply rewarded. In addition to this herd, a few other small bands of cattle came into the country in the course of 1875 and 1876.

In 1877 Fred Kanouse turned a bull and twenty-one cows loose on the open range, and may therefore claim to be the father of Alberta ranching.<sup>3</sup> The bison disappeared in the later 'seventies, the coming of the Mounted Police terminated the outrages of the whisky-traders, and the Blackfoot Indians, by the Treaty of 1877, accepted definite reservations instead of their vague claims to the whole country. Before 1880 shacks and corrals began to appear in different parts of the country. There were a few west of Calgary and some in the Calgary district, a few on the Macleod trail from Calgary south, some in the neighbourhood of Macleod and some on Pincher Creek. A number of old Hudson's Bay men and

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 120.

hunters now took up ranching, and a few whisky-traders followed their example. Even before 1880 a small trickle of that mighty flood of immigration that was destined to engulf the ranching industry itself, added its quota to the ranching fraternity. But, most important of all, a considerable number of Mounted Police officers and men, having served their time, took scrip and became cattlemen. Indeed, the fact that so many of these early pioneers were men of the Force, who, though no longer wearing its uniform, and under no discipline, were still imbued with its spirit and always ready to lend a hand in the cause of law and order, probably did more than has been generally recognised to make the early history of Alberta the model of what a pioneer community should be.

Southern Alberta was singularly well suited by nature for the establishment of a live-stock industry. From remote ages it had supported vast herds of bison and in fact, was one of the favourite haunts of that animal. In the summer time the country was one vast pasture, and the buffalo grass, blue-joint, timothy, oat, and other natural grasses that carpeted it were not only rich and nutritious in themselves, but possessed the peculiar property of curing as they stood in the sun and winds of autumn. Although the climate is semi-arid, the country is well watered, as it is drained by the vast system of the South Saskatchewan and is traversed by many large rivers and innumerable small creeks and streams, while water-holes and good springs abound in the foothills. The summers are usually hot, and thanks to the prevalent Chinook winds, the winters are generally mild, so that the snow is seldom too deep to prevent cattle from muzzling through to the grasses which it covers. Occasionally a winter is almost entirely free of any snow, but ranchers usually preferred to have the ground covered a few inches deep, as the cured grasses were thus apparently supplied with the necessary

amount of moisture to keep them in good condition. According to the ranchers themselves, a characteristic of these prairie grasses was that one ploughing destroyed their quality of curing in the autumn. Even if the land was allowed to go back into its natural state, though the grasses which grew upon it made good summer pasture, they would never again cure in the old way as they stood.

"As a stock-raising country", wrote Alexander Begg, the voluminous historian of the North-West, in 1881, "the Bow River district is the best in America. I say this advisedly, as I journeyed through a large portion of Montana and through the Bow River district as far north as Edmonton (about five hundred miles north of Fort Benton) in August, September and October 1881, and closely observed the capabilities of each section along the route."<sup>1</sup> Though at the time many regarded Begg as an uncritical enthusiast, whose judgment was not to be relied upon, the remarkable growth of the ranching industry in the course of the next few years more than justified his view.

Pioneer ranchers had many serious difficulties to contend with, as the following extracts taken from the memoirs of E. H. Maunsell, perhaps the best known of all of them, will show: "About the beginning of June we had very hot weather, and one day going for provisions I saw the river was so high from the melted snow, it was not fordable, and at that time I did not know much about swimming a horse, so returned home intending to call at Boys' or Allison's and borrow some flour and bacon. Boys' was the first place I got to. He asked me if I had been to the store, and I told him the river was too high to cross; and he said: 'That's awkward, as Allison and I are nearly out'. So I went home. All the food that was in the house was enough bread for two meals and a little bacon grease; we were also out of tobacco. I caught some

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Macoun, *Manitoba and the Great North-West*, p. 270.



pike, so we had some fish for supper and breakfast next day, fried in bacon grease. We were already tired of pike, but had to eat them or nothing. . . . That night the wind went to the north and a terrific rain set in. The rain continued for three days; it came down in torrents, and the second day after the rain one could not tell where the original river was, as the water was flowing all over the bottom. When it cleared up we moved our beds outside to get them dry and to get away from the drip, as it was still raining in the house. By a tacit arrangement my brother and I held no conversation, for had we done so no doubt there would have been a quarrel. It was a fortunate thing I had so many fish, as the sloughs now were raging rivers and fishing was out of the question. We tried the pike boiled, we tried them baked, we tried them hot and we tried them cold, but they were nauseating. . . . We did not visit our neighbours, Allison and Boys, for we were afraid they might have some grub left which we knew quite well they would force us to share with them.

"In a few days the river went down to an ordinary flood, and I rode to the ford in the hope that the Police would put in a boat, but they had their own troubles to attend to. One day while riding to the ford I saw several tents on the prairie which cheered me much, as I thought I could borrow some grub from them. This was a surveyor's camp, under the charge of Mr. A. P. Patrick. My hopes fell however, when I met Mr. Patrick, as the first thing he asked me was: 'What's the chance of getting a boat across, we are nearly out of provisions?' I did not tell him the desperate position I was in, but out of a tent came Mr. L. Hugill, whom I knew very well. I told him our condition, and he said: 'We are not so low that we can't give you something', so I was given a good chunk of bacon, some flour and baking powder, and a plug of tobacco. He asked me to remain for dinner, which I

declined for two reasons. My brother was at home starving, and I did not want to make an exhibition of myself with my ravenous appetite, so I packed the grub on my saddle and went full gallop until I reached the house.

"My brother was sitting outside and I shouted to him: 'Make fire!' He asked me no questions, and while he was making the fire I mixed up some flour and baking powder and had a loaf in the oven long before it was warm. I then sliced a liberal supply of bacon and started to fry it long before the bread was baked. The smell of the frying bacon sent us nearly crazy and we could not wait until the bread was regularly baked, but kept breaking off half-baked chunks of the loaf. I never will forget this meal, for we kept eating and eating, but never a word was said. We have read of those marvellous feasts which Lucullus used to indulge in, but never did he enjoy one as my brother and I did that fried bacon and half-cooked bread.

"When the banquet was over I produced the plug of tobacco. We filled and lit our pipes and then lay on our beds and smoked in silence for a few minutes, then a conversation started, and if we had not met for twenty years we could not have said more to each other."<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after this the Maunsell brothers went to Macleod to receive their cattle, which had been brought over from Montana by a man named Tom Lynch. "It was late when we got them branded, and my brother and I started for home. Neither of us knew anything about driving wild cattle. They had been in the corral overnight and were thirsty and excited after branding, and when let out they started to run. I will never forget that drive. We thought the cattle were going to keep on running for ever, and it was after dark when we got them near our cabin, where there was fortunately a slough. Here they drank and immediately began grazing, which was

<sup>1</sup> Maunsell, E. H., *Reminiscences*, pp. 30-2.

a great relief, as both we and our horses were completely worn out.

"We had been up since four in the morning and had had nothing to eat since breakfast, so we at once made for the shack to get supper. We found the door had been burst open; the Indians had taken advantage of our absence. But when we lit the lamp we saw something that we thought was noble. Instead of those starving savages cleaning us out of grub they had left us a few pounds of flour, some bacon, tea and sugar, enough for a couple of meals. Not another thing was taken, except an illustrated Bible which had been given me by a favourite aunt.

"Fearing that the cattle might take it into their heads to start running again after feeding, I undertook to night-herd them, but to my delight they lay down and started chewing the cud. I thus learned my first lesson in handling range cattle, for I saw that the reason they were so wild was that they were thirsty and hungry and that a full stomach made for contentment.

"We got our cattle well located near our cabin, and thought ranching would prove a charming industry, but in a few weeks things did not look so rosy, for when we counted our cattle we found we were several head short. Believing that they had wandered away, we searched the country but could not find them. I went to see Olsen, who also had some cattle, and he said that we would never see them again, as there was no doubt that the Indians had killed them, and he had lost several head from that cause already."<sup>1</sup> To the deputation of cattlemen that complained to him of their losses, Colonel Macleod replied that they would receive no compensation, as they had brought the cattle in at their own risk and the country was not yet open for settlement.

In his Annual Report, Colonel Macleod pointed out that

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 32-3.

many of the neighbouring stockmen believed that, while Indians had probably killed a certain number of cattle, white men had probably killed more. He further suggested that many of the missing animals had probably strayed back to their old ranges in Montana, while the fact that seventy carcasses had been found in one coulee seemed to show that the weather was also partially responsible for the losses. "I pointed out to them that if they herded their cattle in certain localities, it would be possible to do something for them, but as long as they turned their cattle adrift on the prairies, and only looked for them twice a year, they were themselves to blame if they lost a great many. To have done what they asked would have amounted to this; that the Police would have had to act as herders over a country about one hundred miles wide and over two hundred miles long, as the ranchmen who have squatted through that section are scattered over a country of that extent."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Maunsell had no doubt that Colonel Macleod had acted for the best. "He wished to see us take our cattle out of the country. Had we remained, there is no doubt that either an Indian or a white man would have been killed, and if the Indians had broken out they would have had no trouble in wiping out the few settlers and Police that were in the country."<sup>2</sup>

Commissioner Dewdney also refused to believe that the Indians were in any way responsible for the losses, chiefly on the ground that the ranchers could not adduce any definite evidence. How he imagined that starving savages, who from infancy had been trained to steal, and who were the most accomplished thieves in the North-West Territories, would refrain from running off a few cattle at a time when they were glad to eat snakes, gophers and even axle-grease, it is difficult to imagine.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1879, pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Maunsell, *Reminiscences*, p. 34.

As there was no hope of redress, it was decided to round up the cattle and move over into Montana. Sixteen poorly mounted men with one wagon participated in the first Alberta round-up, which proved so disappointing for those concerned. Montana turned out to be almost as insecure as Alberta, however, as the Maunsell brothers discovered. "As soon as the round-up was finished (in 1881) we accompanied Miller to Willow Ròunds, Montana, where he turned over our cattle to us. We found that the little herd of fifty-six that we entrusted to him in '79 had diminished to less than fifty head. Miller accounted for this by saying there had been a great epidemic of blackleg amongst the calves the previous year, which accounted for us having no yearlings. I knew blackleg was a fatal disease among calves, but did not know it would attack one brand of cattle and overlook another, because Miller's herd seemed to have more than the average number of yearlings, but anyway we were glad to get back what was left and get back to Canada."<sup>1</sup>

In 1879, the Government imported one thousand head of cattle to form the nucleus of a breeding herd for Indian requirements, which should of course, have been done at least a year earlier. In 1880 it set itself to encourage the growth of ranching, and under authority of Act of Parliament revised the land regulations.<sup>2</sup> These now provided for the leasing of Government land up to a hundred thousand acres, not liable to cancellation, at an annual rental of ten dollars a year per thousand acres, later raised to twenty dollars. Lessees were required within three years to place one head of cattle on the range for every ten acres (later reduced to one head for every twenty acres). In order to stimulate leasing moreover, it was provided that lessees should have the privilege of importing their cattle free of duty.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, this

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> 44 Vic. cap. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Blue, *Alberta, Past and Present*, vol. i. pp. 321-2.

was probably one of the chief incentives to lessees, as in any case the open range was there for all, lease or no lease. When they had placed the statutory number of cattle on their ranges, lessees were allowed to buy a home farm at the rate of two dollars an acre. Legitimate settlers such as the Maunsell brothers and others, who were already in the country when this Act was passed, and had built their shacks and corrals and brought in their cattle, were greatly perturbed by rumours of what was going on at Ottawa. "We found that all the land surrounding where we lived had been leased, and we were alarmed as to whether our squatters' rights secured us that amount of land that we had fenced in and which, of course, was entirely inadequate to graze our cattle. We expected every day that the owner of the lease might come along and order us to remove our cattle. . . . The owner of the lease on which our cattle ran never took possession. In fact, fully nine-tenths of those that applied for and obtained grazing leases were only speculators who had no intention of putting cattle on. The way in which these leases were granted had a most disastrous effect on settlement; no one knew what was leased and what was not leased." In Mr. Maunsell's opinion "had this leasing system been postponed for a few years, there is no doubt that the country would have filled rapidly with a class of small stockmen instead of being monopolised by a few huge ranch companies."<sup>1</sup>

Instead of charging so much a head, which was the practice in the State of Montana, the Canadian Government adopted the system of charging so much an acre for the land, and prescribing the proper proportion of cattle to acres which a ranch might carry. This wise policy rendered overcrowding, with all its attendant evils, impossible. Almost from the beginning the Government did its best to ensure that all stock brought into the country, as well as that already there, should

<sup>1</sup> Maunsell, E. H., *Reminiscences*, pp. 43-4.

be healthy. A long series of regulations on this subject began with an Order-in-Council dated September 8, 1884, which provided for the compulsory inspection of all stock being imported and for quarantine.

When regular traffic started on the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1887, the period of quarantine was extended from sixty to ninety days. In the following year two townships were set apart on the boundary line between Alberta and Montana for quarantine grazing grounds and stations. At the time this very sensible policy was bitterly criticised by the *Macleod Gazette*, on the ground that it was calculated to work in the interest of the large ranching companies at the expense of their smaller rivals. It was stated that the former now had their ranges well stocked, and that these regulations, by keeping out the big American herds, would lessen competition and enable them to manipulate the markets in their own interests. Such criticisms however, were clearly unsound, since it was obviously in the interests of all that Canadian herds should be free from disease.

In 1892 the quarantine system was still further elaborated. Three large areas were set apart, and no cattle were henceforward to be entered between September 30 and March 31 in each year.<sup>1</sup> This regulation was altered in 1894 respecting the location of the quarantine stations, in order to secure better water supply and to give the North-West Mounted Police better opportunities of supervising quarantine.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Order-in-Council, September 17, 1892:

1. Township 1. Ranges 19, 20, 21, 22.
2. Township 1. Ranges 12, 13, 14, 15, W.4.m. } West Milk River.  
Township 2. Ranges 12, 13, 14, 15, W.4.m. }
3. Township 1. Ranges 4, 5, 6, W.4.m. } East Milk River.  
Township 2. Ranges 4, 5, 6, W.4.m. }

<sup>2</sup> The new reservation was defined: "All that triangular tract of country bounded on the west by the main stream of Willow Creek, on the east by the north fork of the same creek and on the north by a small creek or coulee emptying into the said north fork" (Order-in-Council, May 9, 1894).

Undoubtedly these regulations did much to keep the Alberta herds healthy, but in practice they were found very difficult to enforce. As will be shown later, almost throughout the whole period American cattle were constantly drifting over the line into Canada, while a certain number of Canadian cattle strayed over into Montana. Rightly or wrongly, the Government believed that State to be the chief centre of infection, owing to the inadequate veterinary service provided. At one time, for example, five inspectors were solely responsible for the health of half a million cattle and twenty million sheep, and a certain amount of disease was therefore inevitable.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking generally, the ranchers did not co-operate with the Government as much as they should have done. Time after time attempts were made by officials to induce Alberta ranchers to take precautions against mange. For years these efforts were completely fruitless, as the ranchers refused, in spite of the clearest evidence to the contrary, to acknowledge that this disease existed in their herds. Indeed, some of them contended that, even if it did exist, the good blood of their stock, assisted by Alberta's sunshine and pastures, would work a natural cure. Finally in 1898, when successive efforts on the part of the Government had failed to move the ranchers, the whole of Southern Alberta south of the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway was placed under quarantine.<sup>2</sup> Even then, many of the ranchers stubbornly refused to dip their cattle, apparently regarding it as a personal affront that such a suggestion should be made. The result was that the disease spread year by year down to 1904, when at long last the most stubborn opponents of Government advice were obliged to recognise that mange was rampant throughout the country and that the time had come for drastic action. Compulsory dipping was at last agreed to,

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 320.



and hundreds of thousands of cattle were treated during the summer. About three hundred and seventy-five thousand or seventy-five per cent, were dipped in the three districts of Calgary, Macleod and Medicine Hat; and by the following year this disease, in addition to many other ailments, had practically disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

Before tracing the development of the ranching industry, the kind of cattle in which the ranchers dealt must be considered. The original range cattle were chiefly of Texan and Mexican strains and on the whole, not of a very high quality. Later, when big ranches were established, and still more when the British market began to develop, attempts were made to improve the general quality. From the beginning many ranchers headed their herds with good and sometimes thoroughbred, bulls and cows. Thus famous British breeds such as Shorthorns, Herefords, Polled Angus and West Highlands, made their appearance on the Alberta ranges. On the whole however, these attempts were not successful, because among other things, many small ranchers were prepared to head their herds with bulls of low breeding, and so long as they could be sure of size and weight, they tended to disregard the finer qualities. With no fences, with no means of segregation and with inferior stock already on the range or coming into the country year by year, it was in fact, really impossible to preserve any satisfactory standard.

The policy of importing two-year-olds, known as dogies or stockers, accentuated the process of deterioration. At first these cattle were imported chiefly from Manitoba and Ontario, and later from the United States and Mexico. They were fattened up on the Canadian ranges and then exported. Mr. W. Pearce was a strong advocate of this system in the 'nineties, chiefly on the ground that open ranging rendered Alberta impossible as a breeding country. The importation

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P., 1904, p. 10.*

of dogies started in 1889 and, in the course of the next fifteen years or so many thousands were brought in.

The British embargo, by decreasing the exports to Great Britain from Ontario, led to an increase in the imports of the now superfluous stockers in that province to Alberta. Seven thousand were imported in 1892, and many thousands more in the following years. In 1900, eleven thousand four hundred and thirty four were imported from Ontario, and twenty-four thousand eight hundred and ninety-six from Manitoba.<sup>1</sup> Early in the new century, some leading ranchers decided that the results from imported Manitoba and Ontario two-year-olds fell far short of expectations. It was therefore decided to import from Mexico, a policy which resulted in the introduction of the very worst cattle that had yet appeared. These cattle were truly Mexican in their combative instincts. They were not only savage, but ill-formed and emaciated in addition, and the best pastures of Alberta could not make them fit for the export trade. They excelled the Canadian cattle only in length of horn and length of wind, and their owners were glad to get rid of them to local butchers.

It should be no matter for surprise then, that Alberta cattle tended to deteriorate, although after 1900 the annual bull sales did something to arrest this process. In 1889 Commissioner Herchmer of the Mounted Police wrote: "All sorts of bulls, many of them perfect brutes, run the prairie, and as long as free ranging is followed, I cannot see that there can be any general improvement. In one herd the traveller will see Shorthorns, Galloways, Herefords, Polled Angus, occasionally a West Highlander, and a good sprinkling of runts." Some ten years later the same observer was even more emphatic in his criticisms, and asserted that the general level was still lower. "The steers offered, show less breeding and are smaller, caused, I

<sup>1</sup> Diller, *Economic Development of Alberta*, chap. v. p. 13.

think, by reducing the number of Shorthorn bulls."<sup>1</sup> He again remarked upon the indiscriminate practices of the range, and stated that the best steers were then coming from the smaller ranches, where the stockmen fed hay all winter and could attend to the breeding of their cows.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1898, p. 16.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATTLE RANCHING

AFTER 1880 the number of stockmen steadily increased. A few small ranchers established themselves that year in different parts of the country, while the big companies were either in process of formation or busily engaged in buying cattle. By 1884, forty-one companies and private individuals held a total of two million seven hundred and eighty-two thousand six hundred and ninety acres in Southern Alberta, mainly in the foothill region from Calgary south to the boundary line. Of these six were one-hundred-thousand-acre leaseholds, and ten were fifty-thousand.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the leaseholders, there were also many cattlemen who ran their stock loose on the open range. A beginning had been made not only in the Calgary, High River and Macleod districts, but also in the Lethbridge area, and west of Macleod on the north, middle and south forks of the Old Man's River. The Cochrane, the Bar U, the Oxley, the Winder, the A. E. Cross ranches, and many others were established and were beginning to develop.

The Cochrane ranch, which was the oldest large concern in the country, had a very chequered history in its early years, a history which deserves some consideration, as it illustrates the kind of difficulties with which many ranchers were confronted. Its founder, Senator Cochrane of Compton, Quebec, took great care to see that it was stocked with suit-

<sup>1</sup> Diller, *Economic Development of Alberta*, chap. v. p. 4.

able cattle, and Colonel Walker, his first manager, was a man with unequalled knowledge of the country and its ways: The first Cochrane herd was purchased in Montana in the summer of 1881, and was received at the boundary line by one of I. G. Baker's foremen with thirty cowboys, who were to turn it over to Colonel Walker at the new ranch west of Calgary. This foreman and his cowboys treated the herd in a way which would make any decent cattleman blush with shame. Having separated the steers from the cows, the two herds were mercilessly moved forward, and it is said that the former averaged between fifteen and eighteen miles a day, while even the cows did fourteen. No time was given for grazing on the trail, and at night the tired animals were herded so closely that they had no room either to feed or even to lie down to rest. Wagons followed behind to pick up calves that had fallen on the trail, but there were not enough wagons to collect all of these, and so many were left to die on the prairie, while others were traded by the unscrupulous cowboys for tea, sugar or whisky. This brutal drive has the record for speed and also it might be added, criminal stupidity, for those in charge neglected almost everything that common sense and humanity should have suggested.<sup>1</sup>

When finally the herd reached the new Cochrane ranch, the cattle were thoroughly out of condition and unfit to face the winter. Thus hundreds more, which normally should have come through with comparative ease, died during that season. Further, as there was no time to brand the cattle properly when they arrived, it was decided to trust to the hair-brand until the winter was over. But when spring came the hair-brand had disappeared, owing to the growth of their new coats. Colonel Walker therefore decided to place the Cochrane brand on all unbranded cattle he found on his

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, pp. 147-53.

range, a policy which at once landed him in a veritable hornet's nest, since there were other ranchers in the neighbourhood who also had unbranded cattle. When their expostulations were not listened to, they determined to take a leaf out of Colonel Walker's book, and hastily put their irons on all the unbranded beasts they could find. As the Cochrane herds were far more numerous than those of the other ranchers, and these knew where to find the cattle better than many of the Cochrane cowboys, who were newcomers to the country, the result was that the Cochrane losses were proportionately greater.

Misfortune continued to afflict this ranch through the following winter, for while the land to the east and south was comparatively free of frost and snow, the Cochrane ranges were caught in the grip of a hard frost and covered in deep snow for months. This made it impossible for the animals to get through to the grasses, and when they attempted to break away to the open ranges they were at once driven back. In consequence of all these misfortunes, when the spring of 1883 arrived, only a scant four thousand poorly conditioned animals remained of the twelve thousand splendid cattle that had been purchased some eighteen months before. After the bitter experience of 1882-3 the Cochrane ranch was moved to other leases in the south, and when established on the new range it was decided to fence it in, so as to ensure that the good quality of the herds could be maintained. Thus some twenty-five miles of fence were built between the Old Man's River and the Porcupine Hills. Fences however, were an abomination in those happy days to all self-respecting cowboys, and so, whenever anyone happened to be near the hated thing with a suitable instrument, it suffered. This pioneer fence was in short, demolished piecemeal, and according to contemporaries, the only good purpose it ever served was that the posts made excellent

firewood for the ranchers and farmers of the neighbourhood.

In his book, *Ranching with Lords and Commons*, Mr. Craig, first manager of the Oxley, illustrates another kind of difficulty that occasionally occurred when a capable cattleman on the spot was obliged to accept orders from distant financial principals, whose ideas of ranching were more picturesque than practical. Enough has been said however, to show that the establishment of a ranch was not always quite as easy as it looked, and that other things besides good range, good cattle and good money were required to make it a success.

Year by year down to 1888, the amount of leased land increased. In 1886 the first big ranch was established at Medicine Hat by the Medicine Hat Ranching Company,<sup>1</sup> and thus that part of the country which Palliser had regarded as useless desert, and which in more recent years stockmen had considered as unfit for live-stock production, came into its own. In a very few years the Medicine Hat herds were as flourishing, and the Medicine Hat ranchers as progressive, as any in the whole country.

According to the census returns of 1881 there were in the North-West Territories five thousand six hundred and ninety horned cattle other than milch cows, and during the next five years or so cattle poured in by thousands.<sup>2</sup> Most of these came from Montana, but some came from British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and a few thoroughbreds from the Eastern States and Great Britain. As an illustration of the enterprise of some of these early ranchers, one Ontario herd was taken to Winnipeg by rail and then driven over eight hundred miles across the prairie to its new home west of Calgary, where it formed the nucleus of the Mount Royal herd. It is said that it took the owner from April to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> Census Reports, 1881.

late autumn to bring his cattle over this enormous distance.<sup>1</sup> The Calgary and Macleod districts alone contained in 1884 fifty-five thousand five hundred and four head of cattle, which had increased by the following year to about seventy-five thousand. Despite the calamitous losses of the previous winter, the number of cattle on the Alberta ranges in 1887 was estimated at about one hundred and one thousand. In 1892, the last year in which returns were given for cattle on the range as distinct from those belonging to farmers, the number was estimated at a hundred and thirty-nine thousand two hundred and eighty-three. These figures, naturally, ought not to be taken too literally, but should be regarded rather as approximations, as it must have been almost impossible in the existing state of the country to make exact estimates. Those who made them frequently proceeded on different methods of calculation and moreover, cattle were constantly coming in and going out of the country. In the year 1886 alone, for example, thirty-four thousand cattle, three thousand five hundred horses, and seven thousand sheep, mainly from the United States, entered the country.<sup>2</sup> The Mounted Police estimated that there were in Southern Alberta in 1892 about two hundred thousand head of live-stock of all kinds, south of the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway. In 1901 Alberta, chiefly of course Southern Alberta, contained three hundred and twenty-nine thousand three hundred and ninety-one horned cattle other than milch cows, and in 1906 eight hundred and forty-nine thousand three hundred and eighty seven.<sup>3</sup>

If the quality of these cattle was not all that it should have been, it was no fault of such pioneer ranchers as Mr. Godsal and others of the Pincher Creek district, as the following extract from his memoirs will show: "Early in the

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> Sessional Paper 17a.



'eighties I fenced in about four thousand acres and began improving my herd. I went to Ontario and brought back pedigree bulls, and by proper system I greatly increased my calf crop, one year even reaching an increase of 100 per cent, whereas the average on the range was about 25 or 30 per cent in the old days. It was in the Pincher Creek district we first started regulating the calf crop by herding all our bulls at the proper time up the Crow's Nest Pass. A very heavy loss of cows in the winter of 1883 showed to John Herron, manager of the Stewart ranch, and myself the necessity of this."<sup>1</sup>

As the industry grew, those engaged in it realised the many advantages of common action, and Mr. Godsall suggests that the co-operative policy adopted in the Pincher Creek area led to the formation of the first Stock Association in Alberta. "This led to the beginning of the Western Stock Association at Macleod, of which, I think, W. Cochrane—manager of Cochrane ranch—was the first president and F. W. Godsall vice-president, and so to the further development of stock associations in the West."<sup>2</sup> In the course of the next few years other stock associations came into existence, so that finally each district had its own particular organisation. In 1895 a central body known as the Alberta Live Stock - Growers' Association ~~was founded, whose aims~~ were to foster and encourage scientific methods among the ranchers, and to represent the interests of the industry as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

It has been seen that the first round-up occurred in 1879, and after 1881 they took place regularly. Mr. Godsall writes: "The first Round-ups were three in the year, the General Round-up in the spring, Fall Round-up for branding late calves and the Beef Round-up. The General Round-up in

<sup>1</sup> Godsall, F. W., *Old Times*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, p. 298.

the spring included owners of cattle from all the districts and covered the whole country. A stray herd was carried along and herded day and night, and so cattle were returned to the district to which they belonged; then after this General Round-up each district had its own local one for branding calves.

"After a year or so the system of General Round-ups was given up in favour of District Round-ups only, each district sending representatives to the others, to collect and bring back the strays of their own districts, and branding was done at the same time.

"I remember a General Round-up meeting at the mouth of the Little Bow. There were eighty riders, each with a string of five saddle-horses, also the various mess-wagons and herders. As it had been reported that cattle had been seen toward Big Bow River, two men were told off by the Captain to hunt that country. I volunteered to go with them, as I was well mounted and wished to know the country, and also always carried a pair of good field-glasses on my saddle. I had nothing to do with the provisioning of the outfit. I was young and a stranger in a strange land, ready to follow and obey. The grub was very deficient, mostly 'sow-belly' from Chicago, and we had no fuel to cook with, as the buffalo chips (or dung) which travellers depended on on the prairies, had been burned up by a fire the year before. Our water supply was from shallow pools, from which we sucked the water through our handkerchiefs, to strain out the 'wrigglers' and other aquatic life. I soon realised that my guides knew no more of those parts than I did, and eventually we came to a river which we knew must be the Bow River, but no signs of cattle, and we were lost. The Rocky Mountains to the west, our natural guide-post, were obscured by smoke. At night we lay on the prairie, letting our horses feed at the length of their ropes. About the third

day we came to a small creek, winding about, level with the prairie, which was Snake Creek. Here we found several wild duck's nests on the prairie and we had a feast of eggs; down they went like oysters, nor were we too particular as to the state of their contents, whether new-laid or in the down. That afternoon we found the R.U. Camp on Willow Creek, many miles from where we had left it. I remember three occasions sleeping out in the snow or round-ups. But it would take too long to relate round-up experiences, and they are all much alike. Who wants to hear the real thing, when nowadays they can see its base imitation while sitting at ease at a stampede or a picture-show?"<sup>1</sup>

Another Old Timer, Mrs. Lynch-Staunton thus describes a round-up: "The Old Time Round-ups have now passed into history, together with the much-maligned cowboys who have been too often characterised as cut-throats, hard-drinkers and desperadoes-in-general, when in truth, for generosity, big-heartedness and willingness to help anyone in trouble, there was none more whole-souled than the cowboy.

"Round-ups were looked upon as the big events of the season. Usually the Spring Round-up began about the 24th of May. Stockmen and riders from all parts of the range joined together in a body, and, after choosing a Captain, loading up the mess-wagon with 'grub', bedding, cooking utensils and sundries, pulled out to the south end of the ranges, where, having crossed the Kootenay River (usually high at that time of year), the different outfits set up camp and there might be five or six of them in all, each with camp-cook and tents sufficient to accommodate all hands, making quite a village of tents. A horse-herd corral was made of ropes and wagons set in a circle. The herders brought in the bunch in the morning, and each wrangler

<sup>1</sup> Godsall, F. W., *Old Times*, pp. 7-8.

caught up the horses he would need for the day. This was hard work on both horses and men and a great time for 'breaking in' horses, which supplied tremendous fun to the onlookers, though no doubt each man had his turn. The riders were told off in all directions, so that the cattle were gathered in from every part. They were driven to the nearest corrals (the Stock Association having built several of these on different parts of the range), where the brands were separated. The cow ponies were almost as clever at the work of 'cutting out' as their riders. When a brand was spotted and the pony headed towards a certain animal, he needed no further directing except the pressure of the rider's knees, to drive the animal where it belonged. The different brands were held in separate bunches outside the main bunch and admitted to the branding corrals separately. The branding was done with wonderful rapidity, as many as 2,000 animals being branded in a day. Ropers on their ponies within the corrals caught the calves by the hind legs, a turn of the rope was taken around the saddle-horn and the calf headed to the side of the corral, where a couple of wrestlers, by a skilful twist, threw it on the ground with the side to be branded up. It was turned back to the bunch by other riders, and the branded animals either turned loose or put in the stray herd to be taken to their own range.

"Having finished the South country the camp was moved, usually to Indian Farm Creek, and the country from Scott's coulee to the mountains worked. Then on to the South Fork and the North country and the Porcupines covered. As the cattle were gathered up, the herd became so great that it was necessary to have night-herders constantly on the alert to keep any part of them from breaking away. Cattle are usually easy to hold unless disturbed or excited. Severe thunder and lightning will sometimes frighten them, when they will begin 'milling'. Then the cowboy has his work cut out for him lest

the panic spread and they 'stampede', rushing blindly in their terror into deep gullies or over cut-banks, when the loss may be very great. In such a case the herders can do nothing but follow, trying by riding alongside to direct their course from the most serious dangers and gradually rounding them up again. For it would be madness to attempt to herd them off; horse and rider would be trampled to death.

"The same routine of work would be carried on until all the ranges had been thoroughly ridden over, the calves all branded and the cattle placed on their respective ranges. The cowboy's life was a strenuous one while on the round-up; nothing but eat, sleep and ride, ride, ride from start to finish; but through it all he was the most happy-go-lucky individual living, always joking or 'swapping yarns' or 'kidding' someone who had a 'bad actor' to 'wrangle' with in the chilly morning, when broncos were especially inclined to buck and a rider might find himself 'staking a claim' in a hurry. Equal in importance to the Spring Round-up was the gathering of the beef in the fall and the shipping of fat steers to markets."<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the excitement of the round-up, the everyday life of the range supplied sufficient incident to ensure that if there is anything in the theory that uncertainty in human affairs tends to develop initiative and enterprise, the ranchers of Southern Alberta would have much to make them progressive, for their lives were affected by many factors over which they had little or no control. To start with, while it is true that in the main, the climate of Southern Alberta was all that could be desired, still just to show that in "God's country" as elsewhere weather is a fickle jade, rain occasionally fell in torrents, and the floods rose and water-logged the lands. Sometimes the winters descended on the country

<sup>1</sup> Lynch-Staunton (Mrs.), *A History of the Early Days of Pincher Creek*, pp. 45-6.

with heavy snows and iron frosts, which made open grazing impossible.

For ten years after "Fred Kanouse turned his bull and twenty-one cows loose on the range", the winters were on the whole so mild that the majority of the ranchers believed that it was quite unnecessary to put up hay, as the cattle would always be able to "muzzle" through the thin covering of snow on the ranges. The winter of 1886-7 however, showed that this could not always be counted upon, as the whole land was held in the grip of a severe frost from before Christmas to the end of February, and during all this time the longed-for Chinook never came. It was impossible for the cattle to reach the grass through the deep frozen snow, and when the cold was at its worst, it was estimated that there were some forty thousand starving animals within a twenty-five-mile radius of Macleod alone. Fabulous prices were offered for hay, but none was to be had, for those like Malcolm MacInnes of Fish Creek, who, profiting by his experience in British Columbia, had put it up, had their own cattle to feed. Sixty per cent of the I. G. Baker herd, the first large herd in the country, are said to have perished, and many thousands of cattle belonging to other ranchers suffered a like fate.

This bitter experience should have taught the ranchers that, good as the Alberta climate was, it could not always be relied upon and that it would be wise to put up a certain amount of hay each year. Hay-making however, meant additional work, and in any case it might not prove to be necessary, so the grim warning of '87 was allowed to go unheeded by many, with disastrous results in years to come. Such refusals as this to face actual facts suggest that many of the Alberta ranchers were gamblers at heart, but when the uncertainty of their industry is considered, this conclusion should be no matter for surprise.

Besides the weather, the country had other little foibles

which, unless care was taken, might result in grievous loss, and of these perhaps the most characteristic was the prairie fire. Another episode in the career of that man of action, Fred Kanouse, well illustrates the ease with which these conflagrations might be started. An Indian sold him a horse which he afterwards found to be mangy so he at once treated it with the orthodox remedy, a mixture of which kerosene was an important ingredient. Being a sensible man moreover, and knowing the predatory habits of some of his neighbours, he decided to place his brand on his new steed at the earliest possible moment. Scarcely however, had the hot iron touched the animal's side when a flash shot out and a blaze spread over the prairie. Before this unfortunate cayuse died, it is said that he had set fire to a wide tract of range country, which it took all the available men in Macleod several days to extinguish.<sup>1</sup>

Macoun describes another fire which overtook him and his companion while on the prairie: "The lurid glare in the heavens kept increasing as the shadows of evening fell, and darkness had not settled over the prairie before we saw long tongues of flame thrown up against the sky from a distant ridge; these disappeared and the bright glare only remained. A few minutes passed and a nearer ridge was reached and a long line of fire was seen to cross it and disappear. . . . A few minutes more and the fire had passed the last ridge, and with the speed of a fast horse it bore down upon us. As it came near us the whirling smoke and flames seemed to take the forms of living things that were in terrible agony and added largely to the sublimity of the spectacle. When it reached our oasis it swept past on either side, and a few gulps of smoke accompanied with a strong, hot wind were the only discomforts it caused us. When it was past we saw that it kept an even front, and wherever the grass was long and thick the

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, pp. 137-8.

flame continued for some time after the first rush had passed."<sup>1</sup>

The year 1901 was a bad one for prairie fires. Dan McNelly, in lighting his pipe, illuminated the prairie. The fire travelled south and west at an enormous speed, between forty and sixty miles an hour, and, owing to varying winds, people who imagined themselves quite safe and miles away from the conflagration found it suddenly racing towards them. Whole bands of cattle and horses perished in the valley of the Little Bow, but worse still, many were left alive with hoofs or legs or horns burnt off or eyes burnt out, and hundreds had to be destroyed after the fire was over, or crawled away to die in secret. Shacks, corrals and all the effects of many ranchers and settlers were destroyed, and almost fifty square miles of country were burnt out.<sup>2</sup>

Sparks from railway locomotives were probably the most common causes of prairie fires, though the careless match, pipe or camp-fire frequently led to disaster. However, the policy eventually adopted by the Canadian Pacific Railway of ploughing a few furrows on either side of the line as a fire-guard, helped to diminish the frequency of prairie fires, while the development of roads and the increasing acreage of ploughed land did much to eliminate this scourge. While undoubtedly forest fires are more terrifying and far more destructive of life and property, yet those who have been roused at the dead of night with the cry that the prairie is on fire, or have had to fight for many days to save their homes, can never forget the experience.

Another source of annoyance and loss to the ranchers arose from the depredations of wolves and coyotes. It has already been seen that the wolfers made a profitable business in the skins of these animals, and before these men disappeared

<sup>1</sup> Macoun, *Canada and the Great North-West*, p. 652.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1901, p. 68.



with the buffalo, they had gone far towards exterminating them on the open prairies. For some eight or ten years after that, these pests were to be found only in the foothills. But as cattle began to appear on the prairie, the wolves came down from the hills, and at first provided good sport for the ranchers when hunted with staghounds. No serious attempt was made to deal with them, with the result that they increased very rapidly, and before the end of the 'eighties had become a serious menace. They attacked any young stock, even three-year-olds, and were particularly dangerous to foals. In some instances they were so prevalent as seriously to cripple small ranchers. Time after time different local cattle associations, and later on the Alberta Stock-Growers' Association besought the Government to encourage the extermination of this pest by offering a bounty, but to no avail, and so they took action themselves. Commissioner Herchmer repeatedly referred to this subject in his Annual Reports, supporting the request for a bounty. In 1892 he wrote: "Timber wolves are more destructive every year, and numbers of young stock have been destroyed by them. The Stock Associations immediately concerned, having become tired of waiting for aid from the Government, have, I hear, at the last taken the matter in hand, and will, I have no doubt, soon rid the country of these destructive animals."<sup>1</sup> In 1893 the Territorial Government finally took the matter up, and offered a bounty of five dollars a head.<sup>2</sup> Though many coyotes and wolves were destroyed—in 1894 one man alone killed fifty<sup>3</sup>—the total number in the country did not appear to be affected very much, for as late as 1898 they accounted for sixty head of sheep in one corral, and it is impossible to estimate the losses of young cattle on the range directly traceable to them.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1892, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1894, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1893, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1898 p. 16.

The ranchers were faced with other difficulties besides those of climate, prairie fires and wolves. It was inevitable that when thousands of cattle belonging to different people grazed freely on the open range, disputes as to ownership should arise. It was not until 1888, and then only after repeated requests by different Stock Associations, that the system of branding was placed on a satisfactory footing. In that year brand recorders were appointed for the different districts, and two stockmen in each were nominated to form with the recorder a brand committee. Those who made use of another man's brand were made liable to a fine of a hundred dollars or forty days in gaol. The presence of any recorded brand of an animal was to be taken in future as *prima facie* evidence of ownership, a policy which had been recommended by the cattlemen ever since the foundation of the industry. But while it was calculated to assist in the recapture of strays or the discovery of thieves, this system weighed heavily upon the steadily increasing number of homesteaders who had no brands of their own. In 1889 it was laid down by Order-in-Council that in future no one would be allowed to graze his cattle on the open range without a permit from the Ministry of the Interior, and the stock of those who continued to do so without such permission became liable to seizure and forfeit.<sup>1</sup>

Disputes between ranchers, particularly between the larger and smaller ones, did not however, end with these regulations. It was almost inevitable that round-ups tended to be dominated by the larger ranchers, and it was customary to allow anyone to place his brand on unbranded cattle, unless the owner was on the spot to establish his claim. As small ranchers and farmers frequently found it impossible to be present at all the round-ups, while the larger ranchers were always represented, the former frequently suffered from

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, pp. 225-6.

this custom. The long series of disputes which arose over mavericks, as they were called, well illustrates this point. According to tradition, the word maverick commemorates an Irishman in Texas who, on the ground of humanitarian scruples, objected to the practice of branding, and succeeded in inducing his neighbours to allow his animals to go untouched. But when spring came and he calmly collected the whole calf crop of the season, the Texans realised that Mr. Maverick had closer spiritual affinities with Jacob than with St. Francis of Assisi. It is said that he was allowed to keep his ill-gotten gains, but was obliged to forgo his humanitarian scruples, and all unbranded cattle on the range thereafter bore his name, until claimed.

In Canada, mavericks were regarded as anybody's property, but usually at round-up time the Association sold them to the highest bidder to help to pay expenses. In 1900 Howell Harris and George Lane, in the interests of good branding, suggested that this policy should be developed still further, and that for the future, in addition to unbranded cattle without owners, all animals with imperfect brands should be sold in the same way. As an illustration of the prevalence of this practice, it is said that in one year over a hundred mavericks were seized and sold. Finally, in 1903, the incident of a steer belonging to a German, which having been seized was afterwards sold despite the expostulations of its owner, became the subject of litigation. A charge of theft was brought against the Captain of the round-up in question, and the Alberta Stock-Growers' Association determined to fight the case and engaged a well-known barrister of the time, Mr. P. J. Nolan of Calgary, to conduct the defence.

Mr. Nolan urged that the existence on the range of a considerable number of unbranded cattle was an incentive to theft, a claim that was undoubtedly true. Mavericks, he asserted, might just as reasonably be assumed to belong to

members of the Association as to anybody else, and that on the whole the practice of selling them to pay round-up expenses was in the general interest. Lastly, he pointed out, this practice was an old and established one, and had long been recognised in fact, if not in law. The judge however, was not convinced, and pointed out that no law could compel people to brand their cattle, and that, provided they took the proper steps, they had a right to turn them loose. No round-up association moreover, had any right to appropriate the property of people not members of their body, and he went on to remind stockmen that they themselves had tacitly acknowledged the weakness of their position in this respect, since for years past they had been trying to have the practice legalised.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that, on the whole, the judge was serving the true interests of the ranching industry, for he terminated a source of continuous bickering which was out of all proportion to the advantages claimed by the ranchers.

Throughout the whole period a certain amount of cattle stealing went on, despite the most vigilant activities of the Mounted Police. In 1902, Colonel Saunders wrote: "Cattle and horse stealing are the crimes I believe to be most prevalent, and they are most difficult to detect. The way the cattle and horse business is carried on in the range country is such as tends to assist this class of crime."<sup>2</sup> One cause which made detection particularly difficult, according to this officer, was "the holding back of information in fear of retribution and revenge". Fortunately, this evil never became as serious in Canada as in the United States, where at one time there was said to be a huge thieving organisation, with ramifications stretching from Mexico to the Canadian boundary line.

A favourite method of the thieves was to alter the brands

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1902, p. 39.

on the animals, which was sometimes done so skilfully that detection was almost impossible. More frequently however, these thieves were not such finished artists. For example, one of them appropriated some Quarter-Circle cattle, and proceeded to carry the quarter-circle round to the full and add a tail so as to produce a Q. This particular individual did his work in a hurry, for when round-up time came the old brand was plainly discernible, and he, like the Arabs, had to fold his tent and silently steal away. As late as 1904, another enterprising person, without making any purchases during the time, increased his herd from eighteen to nearly one hundred in the space of fourteen months. Another optimist, who had thirty-two head of cattle, claimed a calf crop of sixty-eight in one season. In Canada however, the way of thieves was hard, and in this case the culprit received ten years in the penitentiary for his pains. From time to time organised gangs appeared in the country, but they were invariably broken up by the Police and the majority of their members brought to justice. Always, and this should be put down to the credit of the Police and to the honour of Canada, the punishment of thieves remained in the hands of the authorities, and there were no usurpations of the functions of the State by such organisations as the Vigilantes or other lynching fraternities.

Another very serious grievance to those of the ranching community who were close to the boundary line, arose over the invasion of Canadian ranges by American cattle. As the century drew to its close, overcrowding became a very serious problem in Montana, and American stockmen looked with envious eyes upon the sparsely populated ranges of Alberta, especially as it was acknowledged that these were naturally superior to those south of the line. Accordingly American herds were quietly encouraged to move northwards, and some owners actually brought their cattle long

distances by train to within a few miles of the Canadian frontier. In 1895 there were said to be one hundred head of American cattle in Canada for every Canadian in Montana. The heavy and comparatively quiet Canadian animals were dispossessed and worried by the wild herds of Texans which were entering the country. In the spring round-up, the Police collected three thousand American cattle in one day and two days later five thousand head on the same ground, while the American round-up men who came over to look for strays found another two thousand <sup>1</sup>

Naturally disputes were frequent, and the Police were besieged with complaints. The big American cattle interests attempted to induce the Canadian Government to throw the Canadian ranges open to their herds. They declared that they were prepared to drive thousands of Mexican steers over the line and to register their brands in Canada, but this would simply have meant that the Canadian ranges would have been eaten up by cattle who later would return to the States to be sold. From 1898 onward the outcry against piratical American herds, particularly the 3CU cattle belonging to the Spencer Brothers of Montana, steadily increased. Inspector Deane of the Mounted Police, assisted by a round-up gang supplied to him by George Lane, seized a herd of these cattle and obliged the owners to pay a deposit of ten thousand dollars.<sup>2</sup> When the Spencer Brothers tried to evade paying duty by leasing land in Canada and stocking it with their cattle, which would later be driven back to the United States, they were obliged by the Government to place their brand on the opposite side to that customary in the States. Thus their cattle had either to be branded on both sides and to pay duty on departure to Montana, or to be sold through Canada as Canadian cattle. Finally, a

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> Deane, *Mounted Police Life in Canada*, pp. 174-7.

bulletin issued by the Dominion Inspector of Customs required all American round-up parties entering Canada to collect strays, to report at the nearest customs house, where they were to obtain a permit before proceeding further. They were to be accompanied by a member of the Mounted Police, who would see that Canadian cattle were not disturbed on the ranges, and that all American cattle were taken home and duly reported outwards. Unless full duty was paid, foreign cattle were not to be permitted to pasture in Canada, and from January 1, 1903, all stock not complying with these regulations would be forfeited and sold.

These regulations however, did not have the desired effect, and so not only Canadian ranges and Canadian revenue, but Canadian herds still suffered. In his report for 1904, Commissioner Perry wrote: "The encroachment of American cattle has been a source of great annoyance. Owing to the high-handed action of an American round-up party south of the Cypress Hills, in forcibly removing their cattle contrary to the customs regulations and in opposition to the direct order of Staff-Sergeant Allen, who was accompanying the round-up, we rounded up and seized all the American cattle found on our side and held them for duty and expenses. The expenses were paid and the duty deposited by the owners, and the cattle were released. We seized in all 1,741 head."<sup>1</sup> Commissioner Perry believed that the only sure method of preventing this nuisance was to fence the boundary line. Such a policy would not only keep American cattle out, but it would probably enable the ranchers and the Department of Agriculture to reap some results from the great efforts they were making to stamp out mange among Canadian cattle. "I would again invite your attention to the encroachment of American cattle, and renew my recommendation, made in my last year's report, that the inter-

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, R.N.W.M.P., 1904, p. 10.*

national boundary should be fenced. I know of no other way to prevent the drifting of American cattle on to our grazing lands. The Department of Agriculture has spent largely, and the cattle-owners enormous sums, in attempting to stamp out disease in their herds. Surely it is idle to do this if contaminated American herds are allowed to graze along with the Canadian herds."<sup>1</sup> But already before this, the Americans had built a fence south of the boundary from about ranges eighteen to thirty west of the fourth meridian, and employed boundary riders to turn their cattle south, with the result that the Macleod district was at last immune from this danger.<sup>2</sup>

It remains now to consider the markets which were supplied by the Alberta ranges. Before the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, I. G. Baker & Company were willing either to buy or to exchange for goods all cattle that were not required by the settlers, by the Police, or by the Indian Department. The coming of the railway survey parties, and later of the railway gangs, created a new demand. The ranchers considered that anything was good enough for the navvies and so rid themselves of many culls,\* for the contractors were prepared to pay good prices indiscriminately for bulls, cows or prime steers. Thus many an old ox that had toiled for years on the trail between Benton and Macleod, or between Macleod and Calgary, made his last public appearance in a cook-shack on the line of construction. Prices were on the whole, very good from the ranchers' point of view. For example, in 1884 the North-West Cattle Company sold eight hundred steers to railway contractors for sixty-five dollars apiece,<sup>3</sup> while in 1885 the latter were paying fourteen cents a pound for their beef and taking the pick of the herds. It is an ill wind that blows no one any

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1905, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1904, pp. 56-7.

\* Worthless animals.

<sup>3</sup> Blue, *Alberta Past and Present*, p. 328.



good, and so the rebellion of 1885 proved to the ranchers. The soldiers and the necessary subsidiary services required beef, and once more they were able to dispose of inferior material for excellent prices, until the Government decided to reduce payments from fourteen to twelve cents a pound.<sup>1</sup>

The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway naturally led to the development of new markets. The first shipments to Eastern Canada and to the British Isles took place in 1887.<sup>2</sup> As, after all expenses had been paid, the shippers cleared forty-five dollars a head on the overseas exports, the old country seemed to promise great things for the future. In the following year Calgary shipped to Great Britain some five thousand carefully picked cattle which produced between forty and fifty dollars profit each, but less well-selected stock turned out a dead loss. It was the realisation that the British market would accept nothing but the best, which induced many ranchers about this time to attempt to improve their herds, with results which have already been mentioned, and from 1888 to 1891 the British export trade continued to expand.

A serious shock to the ranchers occurred when, on November 21, 1892, the British Government placed an embargo on all Canadian cattle. Some alleged cases of pleuropneumonia were reported among some animals, which incidentally, came from Ontario, but all Canada had to suffer. At the time, even among British experts, there was a difference of opinion as to the correctness of the diagnosis. At least one distinguished British authority declared that it was definitely wrong, and certainly the most exhaustive examination of Alberta herds failed to reveal the slightest indication of this disease.

<sup>1</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, pp. 183-4

<sup>2</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1887, p. 16; also C.P.R. Annual Report, 1887.

As, under the conditions of the embargo, it was necessary to slaughter the cattle shortly after their arrival in England, and before they had had time to recover from the bruises, loss of weight and general debility consequent upon their long rail and ocean journey of about six thousand miles, there took place an inevitable falling off in their market value. It was estimated at the time that the journey caused a loss of between nine and ten per cent, and after the embargo, the average price of Alberta steers on the English market fell from fifty to thirty-five dollars. In spite of it however, the number of cattle exported to Great Britain continued to grow. Six thousand five hundred were shipped in 1893 and a still larger number in the following year.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Mounted Police estimates, the output of the Canadian ranges in 1895 amounted to twenty-five thousand head, and in 1896 the Canadian Pacific carried fifty thousand from the Territories.<sup>2</sup> Twelve thousand came from Alberta, while eighteen thousand were exported to Great Britain and two thousand to British Columbia. While the export figures increased steadily from 1892 on, except for the year 1898, when there was an absolute shrinkage, the effect of the embargo was to depress the beef trade, and but for it these figures would probably have been much higher. The exports eastwards from the Alberta ranges from 1901 to 1904 were:

1901	.	.	.	13,631
1902	.	.	.	21,557
1903	.	.	.	16,937
1904	.	.	.	25,631 <sup>3</sup>

The British Columbia market, which was first opened up in 1890, continued to grow, and in 1896 one firm was shipping four hundred head a month to this area. In 1897 P. Burns was killing six hundred head a month for that market. The

<sup>1</sup> Diller, *Economic Development of Alberta*, chap. v. p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* chap. v. p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* chap. v. p. 14.

development of the East Kootenay district and the establishment of flourishing mining and lumbering industries there created a new market, which enabled the ranchers to dispose of cattle that were unfit for the export trade. The importance of the British Columbia market to Alberta is shown by the fact that shipments thither grew from practically nothing in the middle of the 'nineties to six thousand six hundred and twenty-seven in 1901 and eight thousand and ninety-three in 1904.

Towards the end of the century, certain alterations in quarantine regulations resulted in the development of a new market, chiefly in stockers, with the United States.<sup>1</sup> Whereas in 1896 only one thousand nine hundred and thirty were taken by that country, in 1889 the number had increased to ninety-two thousand eight hundred and sixteen, of which thirty-five thousand were exported from Manitoba and the North-West Territories. This sudden increase was largely due to the fact that Manitoba and Ontario, which had previously been the chief sources of Canadian stockers for American ranches, were no longer able to meet the demand, and thus Assiniboia and Alberta benefited.

In spite of temporary set-backs therefore, the 'nineties as a whole witnessed an expansion in Alberta's export of cattle. At the same time, the number of settlers increased year by year and the local demand steadily grew, and from the beginning of the century down to 1905 these tendencies, both in the home and foreign trades, continued. If the ranchers had only their markets to think of, they might well have looked forward with confidence to years of steady development and increasing prosperity. But there were other grim facts in the situation to be considered later, which rendered such expectations, if they were ever held, the insubstantial fabric of a ranchman's dream.

<sup>1</sup> Blue, *Alberta Past and Present*, p. 329

## CHAPTER XII

### HORSE AND SHEEP RANCHING

It has already been seen that the Blackfeet became an equestrian people some time during the first half of the eighteenth century. Early explorers who visited them constantly refer to their large herds of horses. With the exception of those belonging to whisky-traders or occasional travellers, Indian cayuses were the only horses to be found in Southern Alberta. Their increase, in spite of the haphazard methods of the Indians, showed that the country was naturally well adapted for the production of this kind of live-stock.

As with everything else however, the coming of the Police Force marked the real beginning of the horse-raising industry. Clearly, native Indian ponies were quite unsuited for Police purposes, and so a breeding farm was established near Pincher Creek in 1875,<sup>1</sup> and similar farms later in other parts of the country. In the following year, a man called Christie brought over from Montana the first herd of horses ever offered for sale in Southern Alberta, and found a ready market among the white settlers, the Indians and also the Police, who paid him a hundred dollars a head.<sup>2</sup> As a regular industry however, horse-ranching did not begin before the early 'eighties. "There is no question", wrote Alexander Begg in 1882, "about horse-raising proving a very profitable industry in the north-west."<sup>3</sup> This writer states that a few mares and thoroughbred stallions had already been brought in, and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Macoun, *Manitoba and the Great North-West*, p. 280.

that large importations were expected that year from Oregon, British Columbia and Montana.

A feature of horse-ranching in Alberta was the violent fluctuations of depression and prosperity with which it was afflicted. Early in the 'eighties General Strange, the Bell Brothers and others took out leases and imported a number of good stallions and mares. It was hoped at the time that they would find a steady market in the British Army, but, mainly because of the transport problem, these early ventures were never wholly successful, though they did result in the introduction of a number of good strains into the Alberta herds. In 1886 the Department of the Interior estimated that the Calgary and Macleod districts contained some ten thousand horses.<sup>1</sup>

The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway gave an immediate stimulus to this industry. In 1887 the Cochrane, Critchley, Rawlinson and Barwis horse-ranches were established on the Bow, and the Stimson ranch on High River. Others elsewhere turned their attention to it; Clydesdales, Hackneys, Irish hunters and thoroughbreds were placed on the ranges, and those engaged in it tried to develop the business on proper lines.<sup>2</sup> In 1888 the result of these efforts was shown in the fact that the Mounted Police bought all their remounts in the country. At the same time, the local demand was increasing among farmers and ranchers, and the Eastern Canadian and British markets had begun to develop. Large numbers of horses were brought to Alberta from British Columbia, Ontario and Oregon between 1886 and 1889, while a few mares and stallions of superior breed were imported from Kentucky and Britain. Upwards of twenty-three thousand horses were reported in the Calgary and Macleod districts in 1888.

<sup>1</sup> Blue, *Alberta Past and Present*, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1890, p. 14.

Under these circumstances the ranchers looked forward to the future with confidence, but their hopes were soon to be dashed. Owing to the promiscuity of the ranges and still more to the importation on a large scale of inferior animals from Oregon, the Alberta herds rapidly deteriorated in quality, a clear indication of which was afforded by the fact that in 1890 the Police could find only one hundred animals in the whole country fit for their use.<sup>1</sup> This decline at once affected the export trade, for the inferior animals sent to Britain were sold at very low prices, and it was clear that if the British market was to be captured better horses must be produced.

For the next five years or so after 1890, though the number of horses on the ranges steadily increased, the industry languished through lack of demand. Indeed, the only market worth mentioning at this time was provided by the newly arrived farmers, and some of the fine breeding animals that had been brought in a few years before were degraded to the plough team. "Horse-ranches", reported Commissioner Herchmer in 1893, "are in worse shape than ever, but it is in a great measure the fault of the owners, as very few of them are successful in raising good horses of any class."<sup>2</sup> By 1895 it was estimated that there were forty-two thousand two hundred and fifty-seven horses, mainly in Southern Alberta. At this time many ranchers never bothered to round up their horses from year's end to year's end, and had no exact idea of the numbers in their herds. A very good barometer of the horse industry existed in the prevalence or otherwise of horse-stealing. When trade was good thieves became active, and when it languished they naturally betook themselves to more fruitful fields of endeavour.<sup>3</sup> Many ranchers went out of the business altogether, and horses had become such a drug on the market by the time of the first rush to the Klondyke, that

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1890, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1893, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Kelly, *The Range Men*, p. 316.

they could be bought for five dollars apiece or fifty dollars a dozen.

From the first foundation of the industry there was always some horse-stealing on the part of the Indians. This activity had ranked in the old days among them as one of the learned professions, and they were one and all good judges of horse-flesh. Occasionally a band of American Indians would cross the line to collect a few Canadian horses, but more frequently Canadian Indians journeyed to Montana to sample those of their kinsmen on that side of the line, as well as those of the white-settlers. In the United States however, white thieves were a very much more serious pest than Indians. An advertisement which appeared in the papers of Montana and Southern Alberta illustrates the sort of thing that went on when the horse trade was good, and also the methods adopted by Americans to combat this evil. "Three Thousand Dollars Reward"—"In March or April last, about two hundred head of horses were stolen from the Teton Range. Brands have probably been changed. A reward of three thousand dollars will be paid by this Association for the capture of the horses and thieves, or one thousand to be paid for the capture of thirty head of these horses and two hundred and fifty dollars for each thief either dead or alive. If as many as a hundred horses and the thieves are captured, the entire amount of three thousand dollars will be paid."

About 1897 prosperity once more returned to the horse industry. The construction of the Crow's Nest line was the first cause of the revival, for the railway contractors required horses and the new districts opened up by this line also helped to increase the demand. At the same time, the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Dominion Government were doing everything possible to encourage settlers to come into the country, and these efforts were beginning to bear fruit. The newcomers required horses for their farms. Then came the

Klondyke rush and an increased demand for horses as pack-animals, for draught work and for the saddle.

The outbreak of the Boer War in 1899 created a new market, and during the next two years various Government agents came to Alberta in search of remounts for the Army. It soon became clear that the country could not meet the demand, and once more large importations from the United States took place, though this time the general quality was vastly superior to that of ten years before. As a result of all these things together, the price of horses more than doubled between 1897 and 1900, and since, in spite of large importations, the demand was still greater than the supply, the ranchers felt able to face the future with renewed confidence.<sup>1</sup> Once more however, sudden prosperity was to be followed by equally sudden depression: In due course the Boer War ended, while farmers began to breed their own horses.<sup>2</sup> Finally it was discovered that winter wheat could be grown in the dry belt of Southern Alberta.<sup>3</sup> This spelt the end of open ranges and of the ranching industry. As early as 1905 mares were offered in the market in large numbers, and the sales of immature animals and even foals in 1906 showed that ranchers were breaking up their herds and that, as a large-scale industry, horse-raising in Southern Alberta was already a matter of history.

Horse round-ups were conducted along lines very similar to those of cattle, except that they usually entailed more riding and harder work for those engaged in them. As a general thing they were not held so regularly, as the industry was never so well organised. Sometimes, as in 1903, the climate interfered with the round-up. On that particular occasion, as a result of a heavy fall of snow followed by bright sunshine, both men and horses were afflicted with snow blindness, so that hundreds of animals lost their lives by

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 333, 445.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 445.



falling over precipices or deep gullies, and the round-up had to be abandoned.

It now remains to trace briefly the history of sheep-ranching. Dr. Hector, of the Palliser expedition, had been impressed with the possibilities of the country for this kind of stock. Alexander Begg believed that Alberta was even better suited for the production of sheep than for that of cattle and horses. The foothills and river-bottoms would, he thought, supply the necessary shelter; the country was well furnished with an abundance of water, and its dry climate and its altitude, together with its rich natural grasses, would make it a shepherd's paradise.<sup>1</sup>

The first sheep in the North-West arrived at Red River after a long overland trek from Kentucky, early in the nineteenth century. As far as Southern Alberta is concerned, a few sheep were driven into the country in the later 'seventies. Joe MacFarlane for example, placed five on the pioneer ranch, but before the 'eighties no sheep-ranching industry was established. Wolves, coyotes and starving Indians would have rendered precarious the lives of any that appeared on the open ranges.

The census returns for 1881 give the number of sheep for the whole of the North-West Territories as three hundred and forty-six, while that of horned cattle other than milch cows was five thousand six hundred and ninety, and horses over ten thousand. Already however, a few pioneers were beginning to lease land for sheep-raising and were buying flocks, and in the next few years large numbers were imported. The foundation stock from Wyoming and Montana were mainly Rambouillet and Merino crossed with Shropshire or Oxfords. They were rather a poor selection and had been mainly bred for wool-production. Later, when it was realised that mutton was more lucrative than wool, they were crossed

<sup>1</sup> Macoun, *Manitoba and the Great North-West*, p. 278.

with Downs so as to produce heavier carcasses.<sup>1</sup> In 1884 eighty thousand pounds weight of wool was exported, and the census of 1885 recorded some twenty-six thousand sheep in the Calgary and Macleod districts.<sup>2</sup>

From the first the sheep-owners encountered the determined opposition of cattle-ranchers, for where sheep grazed it was impossible to run cattle. Sometimes these disputes were very animated, but they never led to anything more serious than words, as in certain parts of the United States, where more lethal weapons were customary. At first, as the cattlemen had the ear of the Government, the industry was regulated in their interests, and in 1882 the grazing of sheep on Dominion lands was prohibited.<sup>3</sup> In 1884 the prohibited area was limited to Southern Alberta, south of the Highwood and Bow Rivers. In spite of this concession, the industry declined for some time after, and flocks were moved to Assiniboia.

But in spite of restrictions, the number of sheep increased throughout the later 'eighties. Seven thousand were imported from British Columbia and the United States in 1886, and the flocks which had been moved into Assiniboia were constantly drifting back into Alberta. The cattlemen however, had been so far successful that sheep had practically disappeared from the district south of Macleod and Lethbridge. In 1888 it was estimated that there were about eighteen thousand sheep in the Calgary district, but, as Commissioner Herchmer pointed out in 1889, large ranches were disappearing and the bulk of the sheep were to be found on small ranches and farms. After 1890 conditions once more improved, and though the majority were to be found in Assiniboia, several flocks drifted back into Alberta, of which the

<sup>1</sup> Blue, *Alberta Past and Present*, p. 345.

<sup>2</sup> Diller, *Economic Development of Alberta*, chap. v. p. 20, states only 10,000.

<sup>3</sup> Order-in-Council of 1882, mentioned in Blue, *op. cit.* p. 345.

largest ran on the lands of the Alberta Coal and Navigation Company on Lee's Creek.

The price of mutton was good, and as the export trade began to develop, the industry once more became popular. During 1891-2 it was firmly established in Alberta, and the cattle kings were obliged to compromise with their rivals and surrender more of their territory. The land east of St. Mary's River and south of the South Saskatchewan was set apart for sheep, while elsewhere in Southern Alberta it was possible to run sheep, provided a license had previously been obtained from the Ministry of the Interior. This arrangement however, never proved wholly satisfactory, and so in 1903, four specific areas were allotted to sheep in Alberta and Assiniboia.

The discovery of scab among the herds in 1893 terminated for the time being the prosperity of the sheepmen, for the British Government at once placed an embargo on all Canadian sheep, and the depression which resulted continued down to the building of the Crow's Nest line. There was a glut of mutton, and even if the sheep had been more adapted for the production of wool, it would have made little difference, since the market for that commodity was also depressed during these years.

But for a short time after 1897 the sheep-owners, in spite of Government regulations, made more money than their cattle rivals. This prosperity, largely due to the new markets for mutton developing in the Kootenay district, was in itself one of the causes of new trouble. Vast flocks were brought over from the United States and thus intensified the evil of overcrowding, a problem which was already perturbing the ranching community, so that the importing sheepmen found themselves anything but popular. In the Lethbridge district for example, where there had been in 1891 just over a thousand head of sheep, there were in 1901 upwards of seventy

thousand, and in this year Knight & Son alone imported forty-six thousand.<sup>1</sup>

In 1902 the number of sheep more than doubled in the Lethbridge district, and the feeling between cattle and sheep men became very bitter indeed. A particular source of annoyance resulted from the growing number of "trailers", a term applied to flocks of two or three thousand herded by a couple of men who lived in a wagon and moved about wherever they could get good feed and water.<sup>2</sup> This sudden prosperity soon proved to be merely the last flicker before extinction. The spring snowstorm of 1903 was disastrous to sheep, and it was followed by a bad lamb crop. It was becoming generally recognised that if sheep were to be reared successfully, they must be provided with some shelter in the winter, and that the incoming farmers, each handling a small number, were better able to do this than were the ranchers. These circumstances decided Messrs. Knight & Son to go out of business, and their example was followed by many others.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1901, pp. 95-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1902, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1903, p. 105.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DECLINE OF THE RANCHING INDUSTRY

IT is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Dominion Government, working in combination, killed the ranching industry. The railway, by opening up the way to the markets of the world, had brought great and immediate prosperity to the stockmen. The Railway Company however, had much land which it was anxious to sell at a good price, and in order to do this it was first necessary that the Dominion should dispose of large tracts of free land. Thus the Canadian Pacific Railway became an ardent champion of immigration, and its agents travelled throughout Eastern Canada, the United States, Great Britain and the continent of Europe, proclaiming the charms of the West and the fortunes to be found there. The Government was equally anxious to fill the country up, for was not national greatness best expressed in the number of people? Apparently it made no difference what sort of people came to the country, so long as they were sufficiently above the anthropoid ape to count as people and thus swell the census returns. In order to carry out this policy, and that Cabinet Ministers might build up reputations for efficiency and statesmanship, it was decided that, whatever the disadvantages, the great leases and later on, the smaller ones had to go. The fiat went forth from Ottawa that all parts of Southern Alberta were suitable for farming, no matter what annual statistics of rainfall, wind and frost suggested to the con-

trary. From 1884 therefore, the Government, which for the last three years had done something to foster the ranching industry and to encourage the investment of capital in it, embarked upon a policy calculated to render its ultimate extinction inevitable.

The first attack was made when it was ordained that in future, homesteaders might take up their holdings on any land, leases for which had been granted after that date. Moreover, no more twenty-one-year leases were to be granted, and the Department was to cancel those already in existence as the opportunity occurred. In 1885 all even-numbered sections of the grazing lands were thrown open to the homesteader for pre-emption or sale, and all grazing leases issued after that date were to be subject to two years' notification of cancellation. The rent was raised from ten to twenty dollars a thousand acres.

In 1887 another regulation was issued which was designed to encourage small ranchers, since it permitted homesteaders to lease land up to two thousand five hundred acres. The result of this was that while the number of acres held on lease steadily declined for several years, the number of lessees increased. This tendency on the whole, was probably healthy, but it was only a step toward the extinction of all ranches, beginning with the larger ones. That same Mr. Dewdney who had given such cold comfort to the ranchers in the early 'eighties, now, in 1889, Minister of the Interior, cancelled over six hundred thousand acres of grazing leases in the Macleod district, and this land was at once thrown open to homesteaders. The climax of Government desertion from the ranchers' point of view, was reached in 1892. An Order-in-Council, dated October 12 of that year, stated that all persons who held leases upon a form which did not provide for withdrawal for homesteads or for railway development, should be notified that their leases would be

terminated after the 31st December 1896. They would be given the privilege of purchasing land up to ten per cent of their holdings at the rate of two dollars an acre, which was later reduced to one dollar twenty-five cents.<sup>1</sup> After surrender, if they wished to continue ranching they would be allowed to lease land under a new form for the unexpired portion of the twenty-one years. The new leases would contain an article enabling the Government to call them in as the land was required for railway development or for homesteading. After 1894 no new leases for more than six thousand acres were granted. The result of these new regulations at once became apparent, for the one million five hundred and seventy-nine thousand two hundred and eighty-five acres of leased land held by a hundred and fifty-nine lessees in 1893, fell to two hundred and sixty-four thousand one hundred and fifty-eight acres held by four hundred and twenty lessees in 1894, and by 1895 all but nine of the original leases had been relinquished.

In the meantime a continuous quarrel had been going on between the ranchers on one side, and encroaching homesteaders and squatters on the other. Indeed, some of the latter had made a regular business of occupying choice springs or water-holes in order to be bought off for a good price. As early as 1887, twenty-five miles of fence had appeared in the district between Kipp and Slideout, which deprived the range cattle of the water and shelter of the river valley. In this particular case, Mr. W. Pearce tried to effect a compromise by inducing the settlers to leave their fences open in the autumn, in order that the range cattle might get down to the shelter of the low lands, but the farmers refused to consider this proposal, on the ground that it would mean that their own cattle would disappear with

<sup>1</sup> Reduction in price effected by Order-in-Council, April 22, 1893; Blue, *Alberta Past and Present*, p. 323.

the herds. The Government policy of the later 'eighties definitely terminated the predominance of the big rancher, and from then until 1905, the general tendency was for the number of ranchers to increase and the size of individual holdings to decrease. The year 1887 had seen the maximum amount of land held on lease—four million four hundred and sixty-six thousand eight hundred and forty-four acres held by a hundred and thirty-two lessees—but the following year witnessed a marked decline in acreage and numbers.

With the exception of this temporary decline and the set-back in 1894 resulting from the new regulations, and another in 1902 due to the unfavourable weather (the weather was the worst on record), the number of lessees steadily increased down to 1905. But, apart from a slight recovery in 1893, the acreage of leased land steadily decreased between 1887 and 1897. In 1896 the acreage fell from nine hundred and eight thousand nine hundred and ninety-one to two hundred and sixty-nine thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven, and still further in the following year.<sup>1</sup> After that, down to 1905, the acreage of leased land increased steadily. This was probably due, first, to the fact that the actual number of leaseholders increased rapidly, and also to the fact that a number of Americans, whose ranges had disappeared before the oncoming tide of homesteaders in their own country, crossed over to Canada, where they were glad to lease land on any condition so long as it gave them an opportunity of continuing their business.

<sup>1</sup> Diller, *The Economic Development of Alberta*, chap. v. p. 17.



Year.	Acres under Lease.	Number of Lessees.
1885	2,098,670	58
1886	3,793,792	101
1887	4,466,844	132
1888	3,252,378	108
1889	3,113,878	115
1890	2,288,347	126
1891	2,213,677	139
1892	1,081,209	142
1893	1,579,285	159
1894	1,298,571	156
1895	908,991	176
1896	269,967	268
1897	264,155	420
1898	361,697	535
1899	554,533	705
1900	610,051	804
1901	682,921	942
1902	1,272,847	908
1903	2,147,467	978
1904	2,292,540	889
1905	2,328,113	745 <sup>1</sup>

The export of native fat cattle amounted to twelve thousand head in 1898, and twenty thousand in 1899, after which there was a steady decline. Down to 1905 on the other hand, the export of stockers grew steadily, with the result that the total exports between 1901 and 1905 increased from twenty-four thousand one hundred and forty-eight to forty-five thousand two hundred and sixty-six.<sup>2</sup> "The Dominion Land Agent at Red Deer wrote in his report for 1905: 'Most of the cattlemen in the south are reducing their herds, or disposing of them entirely, and turning their attention to the raising of thoroughbred stock'."<sup>3</sup>

The ranching community however, was not prepared to surrender without striking a blow in its own defence, and so, through its mouthpiece the Alberta Stock-Growers' Association, it, once more petitioned the Government. In previous

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

years it had asked for Government assistance in the suppression of wolves, but the Government had refused to take any action, and so the various organisations, as well as the central association, had offered bounties themselves to encourage the destruction of this pest. And now again as with wolves, so with the problem of encroaching homesteaders, the Government turned a deaf ear to the request of the ranchers. Time after time they pointed out that they, as well as the homesteaders, had some right to consideration, but to no avail. Homesteaders kept pouring in and established themselves in the most choice areas of the range, and their fences soon deprived the cattle of their old water-holes, their old springs and their old shelter. The ranchers prayed for some relief from the steadily increasing mileage of barbed wire fences that were cutting the range in all directions, and leading to serious overcrowding. They asked for more generous leasehold conditions, or at least the right to purchase their holdings at a low rate, or that they might be given closed leases for a definite and reasonable period of years. Failing all this, they besought the Government that those sections of the country which were known to be unfit for agriculture because of prevalent summer frost, high wind velocity which led to soil drifting, or the nature of the country, should be definitely set apart for their use. Although there was undoubtedly a good deal of such land in Southern Alberta, the Government refused to listen, for the wise men at Ottawa had decided that the West must be filled up with people, cost what it might, no matter what common justice or good sense might suggest to the contrary. Those unfortunate homesteaders who found themselves with a hundred and sixty acres of arid land to cultivate, and no crops to reward their labours over a period of years, had no reason to be grateful to the Government and much to make them wish that the ranchers had had their way.

After 1900, the old ranching districts of Calgary, Macleod and Lethbridge rapidly filled up, and stockmen took their stand in new districts, some south of Medicine Hat, some in the Cypress Hills, some on the Little Bow or along the Red Deer River north-east of Calgary.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere the mileage of fences grew, and old cattle trails that had been used since the foundations of the industry were enclosed. Round-ups became unnecessary, and indeed, owing to the prevalence of barbed wire, dangerous. In 1902 Colonel Saunders wrote: "The days of the big rancher are numbered, and unless he purchases enough land outright to run his large herds in, he will have to seek pasturage elsewhere. Though methods must change, the stock industry is bound to be the principal one in this district for many years."<sup>2</sup> Although a faithful remnant still clung to the dying industry—E. H. Maunsell, for example, actually extended his herds and his holdings between 1901 and 1905, while George Lane and some associates bought the Bar U cattle and leased large areas from the Canadian Pacific Railway—still, the majority after 1903 steadily decreased their herds or withdrew from the industry.

In 1904 the Cochrane Ranch Company, the biggest pioneer firm in the country, decided that the end had come and that it was time to go out of business. Five hundred thousand acres of some of the best land in the country were therefore placed on the market, and at once bought up by the Mormon Church at six dollars and twenty-five cents an acre, and in the course of the next few years the value of this land more than trebled. By 1905 the Lethbridge district was completely fenced within a radius of twenty-five miles of the town.<sup>3</sup> The export figures for 1906 illustrate the now established policy of the ranchers to get rid of their herds.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1902, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1902, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of Commissioner, R.N.W.M.P.*, 1905, p. 92.

About one hundred thousand head of cattle and twelve thousand horses were shipped out of Southern Alberta, and the same tendency was apparent in the exports of sheep.

Indeed, it was largely chance that enabled this industry to last as long as it did. The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which was ultimately to prove the means to its extinction because of the easy access it provided to the homesteader, at first brought great prosperity. For several years after 1885 the total number of farmers was insignificant. This was due to a variety of causes, among which not the least important for some time was the fear of an Indian rebellion, resulting from the rising of 1885. Further, the belief based largely upon Palliser's report as well as upon those of later visitors to the country; that Southern Alberta was largely an arid waste, also did something to discourage settlement. Incidentally, the ranchers did their best to support this theory, for they, like the Hudson's Bay Company before them, though for different reasons, were averse to the country being filled up with homesteaders. The lack of adequate transportation facilities away from the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, also discouraged farmers. The policy of the Railway Company itself further retarded immigration, as it preferred to hold its own lands until the most of the free Dominion land had been disposed of, in order to obtain a good price. This policy however, by leaving vast areas of vacant land along the main line, led many prospective settlers to return to their homes in the East or the Old Country, with the impression that it was desolate. Lastly, the acquisition of large tracts of land by immigration companies that were in reality worthless speculating ventures, also hindered settlement.

But despite all, as has been seen, immigrants steadily came in until the small trickle of the late 'eighties had become a vast torrent in 1905. On the whole, it was probably

a good thing for the country that the ranch should yield place to the farm. Ranching was a wasteful method of live-stock production, which rendered much good farm land useless. But while this is so, it is nevertheless, very much to be doubted whether the Canadian Government was wholly wise in its cynical disregard of the ranchers' interests. After all, however wasteful their method may have been, they had done great things for the country, and had made it not only fit to live in, but famous in many parts of the world. Moreover, many areas were now set aside for homesteaders which should have been left as grazing grounds for steers, and undoubtedly some place for a ranching industry, on a fairly extensive scale, should have been found in the new province of Alberta.

With the passing of the range went much that was most characteristic of Southern Alberta and of the Canadian West. "The words 'lord' and 'lady' mean 'dispensers of bread'. We were all true lords and ladies in the West in those days; every man and woman made bread, whether it was with baking-powder, yeast, or sour dough. We made our own candles and our own soap, making the lye for our soap. We were Nature's children, living in Nature's way and very close to Nature. We were not living for dollars—we seldom saw them. A man's wealth was in his horses or cattle, as in patriarchial days—he was valued as a man owning so many, and so we were at the beginning of things.

"In 1882 I helped my neighbour to thrash his grain by taking over a bunch of my horses to tread out his grain in his corral, as in Bible days. Herding cattle at night on the prairie under the clear blue sky and its countless stars, or by day on the limitless prairie, in sight of the Grand Rockies, one could appreciate the Psalmist's words: 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help'."

<sup>1</sup> Godsal, *Old Times*, pp. 9-10.

The Western cowboy was not the romantic figure and never quite so picturesque as he has been painted by those who did not know him. His wide-brimmed sombrero, his high-horned Mexican saddle, his chapps and his bucking bronco have furnished material for countless thrilling scenarios, and yet they have all somehow failed to portray the man as he was. A life that was often lonely, frequently dangerous and always hard, spent on the open range, produced a man of few words, vigorous in body and self-confident in spirit. Obligated by the nature of his work to rely upon his own resources and to take his own line of action, he was often impatient of discipline and almost aggressive in his independence. At the same time, he was according to his lights, both courteous and honest, and his unmistakable cavalier swagger always gave him distinction. Except when he went to town for a few days' relaxation, the cowboy's world was the range on which he lived. Of the great problems of his age he knew nothing, and he usually had an arrogant contempt for cities and those who dwelt in them. So long as he had the sunshine and wind of the prairie, horses to ride, steers to lasso and herds to manage, he was content. While the cowboys lasted, they gave to Western life a dash of colour and a touch of romance which was, in its way, unique.

O Lord, I've never lived where churches grow.  
I love creation better as it stood  
That day you finished it so long ago,  
And looked upon your work and called it good.  
I know that others find you in the light  
That's sifted down thro' tinted window-panes,  
And yet I seem to feel you near to-night  
In this dim, quiet starlight on the plains.

I thank you, Lord, that I am placed so well,  
That you have made my freedom so complete;  
That I'm no slave of whistle, clock and bell,  
Or weak-eyed prisoner of wall and street.

Just let me live my life as I've begun,  
And give me work that's open to the sky;  
Make me a partner of the wind and sun,  
And I won't ask a life that's soft or high.

Let me be easy on the man that's down,  
And make me square and generous with all;  
I'm careless, sometimes, Lord, when I'm in town,  
But never let them say I'm mean or small.  
Make me as big and open as the plains,  
As honest as the horse between my knees,  
Clean as the wind that blows behind the rains,  
Free as the hawk that circles down the breeze.

Forgive me, Lord, when sometimes I forget,  
You understand the reasons that are hid,  
You know the many things that gall and fret,  
You know me better than my mother did.  
Just keep an eye on all that's done and said,  
Just right me sometimes when I turn aside;  
And guide me on the long dim trail ahead,  
That stretches upward to the Great Divide.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The author is Charles Clark, junr., a cowboy, and the poem is quoted in Deane, *Mounted Police Life in Canada*, pp. 180-81.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AGRICULTURE AND MINING

ALTHOUGH farming started in Southern Alberta almost as soon as ranching, it was not until the first years of the present century that it began to rival that industry in importance. This relatively slow development was due to the widespread belief that, with the exception of the narrow fertile belt in the foothills region, the southern prairie was practically a desert. The Hudson's Bay Company had persistently misrepresented the character of the country, in order to preserve it for the fur trade.

According to Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the prairie generally was unfitted for agriculture, though here and there, he acknowledged, fertile patches were to be found. Sir George Simpson and other Hudson's Bay officials held that such lands were small in extent and were too inaccessible for settlement, so long as good land was to be had in the eastern and southern parts of the continent. He considered furthermore, that the climate was so rigorous and the seasons so uncertain that it would be idle to expect crops to be harvested regularly year by year. Palliser, generally speaking, supported this view, and naturally the ranchers did not exaggerate the agricultural possibilities of a land that they wished to preserve as open range. Thus these old opinions persisted after settlement began, and many an Old Timer can well remember being told that those who tried to farm



on the open prairie were courting disaster, and that the only possible agricultural lands were to be found in the sheltered river valleys.

While however, Hudson's Bay officials were so definite about the agricultural limitations of the plains region, many of their posts were well supplied with excellent kitchen gardens, and some of them at least, annually harvested abundant supplies of barley, wheat and other cereals. In 1808 Daniel Harmon wrote in his journal: "Our principal food will be the flesh of the buffalo, moose, red-deer and bear. We have a tolerably good kitchen garden, and we are in no fear that we shall want the means of a comfortable subsistence."<sup>1</sup> In the following year he speaks of cutting down the finest barley he had ever seen, and in 1810 states that wheat, rye, barley, oats and pease would grow well on the plains around us."<sup>2</sup>

Hind in 1860 wrote: "The discovery of a fertile belt of country extending from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains gives this part of North America a more than passing interest."<sup>3</sup> Even Palliser spoke with enthusiasm of the fertile belt along the Rocky Mountains, and it has already been seen that Hector believed the south country admirably adapted for sheep. Macoun however, enjoys the distinction of being the first "booster" of the farm lands of Southern Alberta, but his opinions were so enthusiastic that many people refused to take him seriously.<sup>4</sup> Although some good crops were produced in the 'eighties and 'nineties, the obvious advantages of that area for stock-raising, and the fact that good agricultural lands were definitely known to exist in other parts of the prairie, checked the growth of farming in the south.

<sup>1</sup> Harmon, D. W., *Journal of Voyages in North America*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> Hind, H. Y., *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition*, Preface to vol. i. pp. v-vi.

<sup>4</sup> Macoun, *Manitoba and the Great North-West*, chap. xxxii.

Like the rest of the prairie districts, Southern Alberta is surveyed in ranges, running north from the 49th parallel and numbered westward from a meridian line. Each range, which is six miles wide from east to west, is divided into townships containing thirty-six square miles, or twenty-three thousand and forty acres of land, in addition to road allowances. The townships, which are numbered north from the boundary line, are divided into sections, each of which contains six hundred and forty acres. The sections are numbered consecutively, beginning with the south-east corner of the township, and thence to the south-west corner, then back along the second line from west to east, and westward along the third row, and so on. Thus, section one is in the south-east corner, section twelve immediately above it, section thirteen immediately above that and section thirty-six in the north-east corner. For the sake of convenience, each section is subdivided into quarter-sections which are referred to as south-east, south-west, north-east and north-west. The result is that by description of a quarter-section, the number of a section, township, range and meridian, its exact locality on the map can at once be discovered.

Each township contains six roads running north and south, and three running east and west. While this arrangement may leave much to be desired in the realm of aesthetics, it is at least convenient, and the absolute chequer-board appearance of the country is to some extent relieved by variations caused by rivers and other topographical features. The adjustments rendered necessary in the townships by the curvature of the earth, are provided for by correction-lines, which produce slight breaks in the road along the township line every twenty-four miles proceeding north.<sup>1</sup> This rather artificial arrangement has many advantages, though it is certain that the legal profession would have found a less

<sup>1</sup> Pearce MS. chap. i. p. 12.

simple one more lucrative, since it renders it impossible for a man to rise by night and remove his neighbour's landmark. The adoption of the singularly simple method of land conveyance, known as the Torrens system, has also saved a great deal of unnecessary litigation.

When the settlement of the West was first contemplated by the Dominion Government, it was assumed that a hundred and sixty acres, or one quarter-section, would be a reasonable size for a homestead.<sup>1</sup> Down to 1884 there was a certain laxity in the administration of the homestead law, for some people acquired three hundred and twenty acres, and some six hundred and forty. In 1884 the law was amended in order to enable the applicant to procure his homestead by three months' residence prior to application for patent, instead of six months' residence for three successive years. Though this amendment enjoined that the homesteader should be able to show that some land had been broken and cultivated, in fact this was inadequately done, and the patentee was able to proceed from homestead to homestead. Portable shacks were specially built, which the homesteader could load on his wagon and move from place to place, thus helping him to qualify for several patents.

The Act of 1884 substituted the possession of a herd of cattle for the requirements that a specified number of acres be broken and cultivated. This led to a practice by which the homesteader purchased the statutory number of cattle by promissory note, on condition that the seller for a consideration, would resume possession of the cattle as soon as the patent had been granted. Thus one band of cattle frequently served the needs of many people. As Mr. Pearce points out, those who were responsible for the slackening of homestead requirements forgot that the homestead was intended to be a home, and not a bribe to encourage immigra-

<sup>1</sup> Dominion Land Act, April 14, 1872, 35 Vic. cap. 23.

tion.<sup>1</sup> Taking advantage of this loophole in the law, many tradesmen in the towns and villages acquired homesteads upon which they never intended to settle, but to hold as a speculation. The result was that many of these places were soon surrounded by large tracts of vacant, undeveloped land. Business was consequently poor, and the over-ambitious tradesmen were hoisted by their own petard.

The policy of granting large tracts of land to colonisation companies and various large corporations, also hindered development. Some of these bodies were purely speculative, and even when they were otherwise sound, it was natural that the most reputable corporation should dispose of its land as advantageously as possible to itself, which usually meant waiting. "It has been the policy of the Company as stated in previous reports not to press the sale of its lands so long as large areas of free Government land remain in their vicinity, but rather to encourage the settlement of the Government lands instead. It is believed that a much better price can be obtained for the railway lands when the free Government lands are out of the way."<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Pacific Railway has been subjected to much unreasonable criticism because of this policy, which after all, was one which any other well-conducted business enterprise would have adopted. Indeed, it can be shown that this Company actually disposed of much land sooner than was desirable, if its own private interests had been solely considered. By 1905, of the original grant of twenty-six million seven hundred and ten thousand four hundred acres, it retained only ten million four hundred and fifteen thousand seven hundred and fifty-four, which means that even when the lands surrendered to the Government are subtracted, it had already sold a great deal.

Unfortunately for the North-West Territories, there were

<sup>1</sup> Pearce MS., p. 31.

<sup>1</sup> C.P.R. Annual Report, 1887.

other corporations not so deserving that benefited from Dominion generosity. The original grant to the Hudson's Bay Company of one-twentieth of all lands laid out for settlement, within fifty years after the transfer of Rupert's Land, was finally settled by giving that Company section eight, together with the southern half and north-west quarter of section twenty-six in all even numbered townships, and the north-east quarter of section twenty-six in townships five, and all multiples of five.<sup>1</sup> Sections eleven and twenty-nine in each township were reserved for schools,<sup>2</sup> and there were in addition special timber and mineral reservations. There is no doubt that the existence of large tracts of vacant land not open to settlement, and of undeveloped sections and quarter-sections in settled areas, besides increasing the cost of government, led to unnecessary dispersion, and induced many who might have settled in the country to pass over into the United States.

Turning from the various abuses connected with its disposal in the early days to the land itself, the soil of the prairie is a rich loam, the result of centuries of vegetable decay, and therefore well provided with nitrogen, potash and phosphoric acid. While the dry winds of the summer undoubtedly tend to lessen the vigour of the growing crops, the sharp, dry weather of the harvest season develops the gluten content of the wheat instead of the starch, and thus produces a hard grain. The planting of wheat in the Calgary area became general in the 'eighties, but the problem of the most suitable seed was not solved until about 1902. Soon after settlement began, it became clear that the natural rainfall could not always be relied upon for regular crop production. The probability of dry seasons resulting in partial or complete crop failure for a series of years, first drew attention to the feasibility of irrigating the land, which was otherwise admir-

<sup>1</sup> Pearce MS. p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 49.

ably suited for grain. The first to attempt irrigation in Southern Alberta was John Glenn, an old trader who settled on Fish Creek in the 'seventies. Glenn irrigated his land by small ditches, with excellent results, but for several years afterwards no one followed his example.

The development of irrigation would probably have come earlier, had it not been for the fact that in the early 'eighties Alberta experienced one of those periods of abundant rainfall, which seem to alternate with dry cycles. So it was not until there had been several partial or complete crop failures after 1885, that this subject received adequate consideration. During the later 'eighties, many settlers who had come to the country at the beginning of the dry period moved to other parts of the Territories where the rainfall was more certain, convinced that nothing but steers would grow in the south. Experimental ditches were dug in different parts of the country before 1890. Among the pioneers in irrigation were the Mormons, who arrived in 1887. These people had already discovered the value of irrigation in Utah, where they had literally turned a desert into a garden.

During the 'nineties, the Dominion Government turned its attention to regulating the development of ditches, and preserving water-rights from passing into the hands of private corporations. The first company of any size to start work was the Calgary Irrigation Company, which was followed in the course of the next few years by several others. By 1905 the waters of the Bow, the Elbow, High River, the St. Mary's and the Kootenay were being used to irrigate neighbouring lands. Of the early ventures in this direction, the Alberta Railway and Irrigation Company was the largest. This undertaking was so successful that by 1903 the Company's vast estate which had formerly supported a few sheep and cattle, contained three villages of seven hundred inhabitants each, a grist mill, an elevator and a sugar beet

factory. By this same year, four hundred and sixty-nine miles of ditches had been constructed in Southern Alberta, capable of irrigating six hundred and fourteen thousand six hundred and eighty-four acres, while other ditches were being dug. In 1904 the Canadian Pacific Railway Company embarked upon its gigantic irrigation scheme which was designed, when finished, to bring some three million acres of arid land under cultivation.<sup>1</sup>

Another factor which helped to put Southern Alberta agriculture on a firm basis, is the system known as dry farming. This is the name given to the practice of allowing the land to lie fallow every second or third year, in order to supply more than the annual average when the land is under crop. The land is first ploughed in deep furrows and then worked over with discs and drag-harrows, and sometimes a soiling crop is planted to prevent drifting. This treatment enables it to store the maximum amount of moisture, while evaporation is reduced to a minimum.<sup>2</sup> American farmers from the western states were the first to try dry-farming experiments in Southern Alberta about 1897 or 1898, and they soon showed that good fall wheat could be grown in the South.

It remained only to discover the most suitable variety. In 1902 E. E. Thompson imported a carload of Nebraska Red, and the resulting crop was a wheat so superior to the original that it was shipped back to the United States as seed. This wheat, which was christened Alberta Red, soon became famous in farming circles, and the region where it was first grown at once began to attract settlers. By 1904 there were seven thousand acres under fall wheat, which yielded one hundred and twenty-one thousand two hundred and one bushels. This grain won prizes in competition with the best

<sup>1</sup> Irrigation material Sessional paper, 2-3 Ed. VII, No. 25a, 1903.

<sup>2</sup> Pamphlet of Ministry of Agriculture, p. 25.

wheat on the Continent. Its spikelets held five grains instead of the average two, and the heads were filled to the top, which made for a heavy yield. The gluten content, hardness, weight, colour and plumpness were unsurpassed. Though other cereals were also successfully grown before the end of the century, the discovery of Alberta Red made the south country for several years a land of "wheat-miners" rather than farmers. The following figures for 1900 and 1905 illustrate the increase of cereal crops at the close of the period.

	Wheat.		Oats.		Barley.	
	Acres.	Bushels.	Acres.	Bushels.	Acres.	Bushels.
1900	43,103	799,839	118,025	2,791,259	11,099	287,343
1903	147,835	3,035,545	311,545	11,728,314	80,900	2,231,186

The policy of relying on a single crop is always hazardous and in the case of Southern Alberta it is unnecessary, as the country is admirably suited for dairy produce. In 1884 the Minister of the Interior stated that, in his opinion, mixed farming offered the greatest opportunities for future agricultural development, and by 1887, a beginning had been made in this direction. In that year the Mormons began to settle in the Cardston district, and at once established the dairying industry of the South. Two creameries were built in the following year, and a cheese factory was established in the Calgary district about the same time. After that the dairying industry developed, though not without some set-backs, with the result that forty-eight thousand pounds of cheese were exported by the Mormons to British Columbia. By special grants and the establishment of creameries, the Federal Government sought to encourage this industry. Between 1898 and 1905, the amount and value of butter manufactured in the province rose from a hundred and sixty-four thousand



one hundred and eighty-eight pounds, valued at over thirty-two thousand dollars, to upwards of eight hundred thousand pounds, valued at over a hundred and seventy-three thousand dollars. But while dairying thus showed satisfactory signs of progress, other branches of mixed farming such as poultry and hog production, lagged far behind. As late as 1899, bacon, ham, fresh pork and eggs were still being imported from Eastern Canada and the United States. The opening of two pork-packing establishments in Calgary did much to encourage development, and by 1905 pork, bacon and ham were already being exported to Winnipeg.<sup>1</sup>

For reasons which have already been given, the settlement of the South proceeded very slowly in the 'eighties and 'nineties. In 1884 for example, only twenty-five homesteads were taken out in the Calgary district, and none in the Lethbridge area. For the next ten years the total number of new settlers was very small, and in 1894 these districts together received a bare five hundred. The majority of those who arrived during these years moreover, were small ranchers to whom agriculture was of very secondary importance. With the beginning of the new century, more particularly after the discovery of Alberta Red and the introduction of dry-farming, the South country at last came into its own. Prairie schooners no longer passed through to the country north of the Red Deer, for many now selected their homesteads in the South. In 1904, over two thousand six hundred and nine homesteads were taken out in the neighbourhood of Calgary, and one thousand nine hundred and forty-five in the Lethbridge district.

Besides ranching and farming, the only other industry of any importance in Southern Alberta during the first thirty years of its history, was coal-mining. Edward Umfreville is reputed to have discovered coal in the south-western prairie

<sup>1</sup> Diller, *Economic Development of Alberta*, chap. vii. pp. 6-7.

before the end of the eighteenth century, and Fidler observed it on the Red Deer River in 1793; these two seams are recorded on Arrowsmith's maps of 1801 and 1811. During the first half of the nineteenth century, coal was used extensively by the fur traders, when their posts happened to be in the coal areas. Dr. Hector of the Palliser expedition described it in 1858 and 1859, and when the Territories passed into Canadian hands, G. M. Dawson and J. B. Tyrrell of the Geological Department explored the country, and found indications of vast stores of coal in the foothills and mountains. In his survey for the projected Trans-Continental Railway between 1873 and 1879, Sandford Fleming also encountered coal in various places, and the opinions of all these early discoverers have since been confirmed by minute geological surveys, which have proved that under the soil of Alberta lie some of the vastest coalfields of the world.

The first coal-miners in the country were Nicholas Sheran and his sister, who worked the coal in the bank of the Belly River, near the site of the present town of Lethbridge. Sheran disposed of his product to traders and Mounted Police, while some of it was actually carried as far away as Benton, where the blacksmiths preferred it to local coal. Elliott Galt, who visited Southern Alberta in 1879, drew his father's attention to the prospect of coal-mining, on the strength of what he himself had seen in the Belly River district. Two years later, Sir Alexander Galt drove from the end of the railway, then one hundred and fifty miles west of Winnipeg, to examine the coal on the Bow and Belly Rivers. Thereafter a small company was formed with a capital of £50,000, Mr. Lethbridge, a partner in W. H. Smith & Company, being president, and Elliott Galt manager. The company purchased four parcels of land containing three hundred and twenty acres each, two situated at Coalbanks or Lethbridge, one at Woodpecker and one at Blackfoot Crossing. It also imported a

sawmill, which it brought up the Missouri and thence across country by bull-team to the Porcupine Hills, where it was installed. This mill cut all the lumber required by the miners and by the little town that at once sprang into existence.

The Canadian Pacific Railway did all in its power to assist the Company, and at once placed a contract for twenty thousand tons, to be delivered at five dollars a ton at Medicine Hat, over a period of five years. Indeed, the discovery of coal was of material assistance to the Canadian Pacific Railway, since by cheapening the cost of construction it hastened the work. When the railway reached the mountains, coal was still being carried all the way from Ohio, and thus the discovery of abundant supplies on the actual line of construction, just at a time when a great deal of heavy work became necessary, considerably lightened the cost.

After the line was finished, coal continued to be an important asset in the Company's annual budget, for the Lethbridge mines soon began to ship a sufficient amount to be mentioned in the report for the year. "The output of bituminous coal from the local mines in the North-West has considerably increased during the year, and the anthracite mines near Banff are not only supplying the demand for hard coal as far east as Winnipeg, but are shipping successfully to San Francisco and other Pacific Coast points by way of Vancouver."<sup>1</sup> The construction of the railway led to the discovery of anthracite coal in the Bow River Pass, and soon afterwards high grade bituminous coal was found at Canmore, and lignite at Medicine Hat.

During the 'eighties the only considerable work was done by the North-Western Coal and Navigation Company, for the Canadian Pacific Railway did not seriously begin to open up its mines before 1891. Owing however, to the economic depression of the middle 'nineties, little of any consequence

<sup>1</sup> C.P.R. Annual Report, 1887.

was done to develop the coalfields before the end of the century. Indeed, conditions grew so bad that the Alberta Railway and Coal Company decided to market its coal in Montana; and therefore built a line to connect Lethbridge up with the Great Northern system.<sup>1</sup> During the 'nineties however, new mines were opened up in the Knee Hill district, while the construction of the Crow's Nest line led to the discovery of the largest field in the province. In 1901 the Frank Mines were opened, the first in that area, and in 1903 other mines were started at Cowley, Blairmore, Bellevue and Coalman.

Thus before the close of the pioneer period, a beginning had been made in the development of the vast coalfields of Southern Alberta, and markets had been discovered throughout the whole of the prairie region, in Montana and to some extent in British Columbia. As an illustration of the growth of the industry during the period, it is sufficient to say that in 1886, the first year for which figures are available, thirty-four thousand two hundred tons were produced, and from then on to 1905, with the exception of slight drops in 1889, 1894 and 1895, the increase was steady. Three hundred and eleven thousand four hundred and fifty tons were produced in 1900, and nine hundred and thirty-one thousand nine hundred and seventeen in 1905.<sup>2</sup>

The existence of almost unlimited supplies of coal in the country not only lessened the cost of railway construction and attracted capital but, with the enormous natural resources of the Rocky Mountains and the rest of the prairie at hand, it foreshadowed for Alberta a great industrial future.

<sup>1</sup> The Alberta Railway and Coal Company had absorbed the North-Western Coal and Navigation Company.

<sup>2</sup> Diller, *Economic Development of Alberta*, chap. viii. p. 5.

## CHAPTER XV

### MISSIONARIES AND EDUCATION

LONG before the fall of New France, the Roman Catholic Church began to turn its attention to the conversion of the Western Indians. When the Sieur de la Vérendrye set out on the first of his memorable journeys, he was accompanied by a priest, Father Mesaiger, and in 1736 Father Aulneau was murdered by the Sioux. After the fall of Canada there was a cessation in missionary activity for over half a century, but at last in 1818, two Catholic priests arrived at Red River. Thus the work was resumed, and from then on the growth of the Catholic Church in the Hudson's Bay Territories was steady. In 1845 the independent bishopric of St. Boniface was set up, which in 1871, was created a metropolitan see.

The Anglicans were the next Christian body to send missionaries to the Far West. In 1820, on the invitation of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Church Missionary Society sent John West to Rupert's Land, and in 1849, Bishop Anderson was consecrated first Bishop of that region. The diocese of Saskatchewan was established in 1872, and that of Calgary in 1888, with the Reverend Cyprian Pinkham as first Bishop.

Though the third to begin work on the prairie, the Methodists were actually the first to attempt the conversion of the Indians of Southern Alberta. A number of Methodist missionaries were sent to Rupert's Land in 1840, in response to a request from the Hudson's Bay Company. Among these

was the Reverend R. T. Rundle, who between 1840 and 1848 worked among the half-breeds and Indians in and about Edmonton, and since then this Church has taken a leading part in missionary work among the aborigines. Another Methodist missionary, James Evans, devised the Cree syllabic characters, fifty in number, which enabled a clever Indian to learn to read the Bible in a few months.

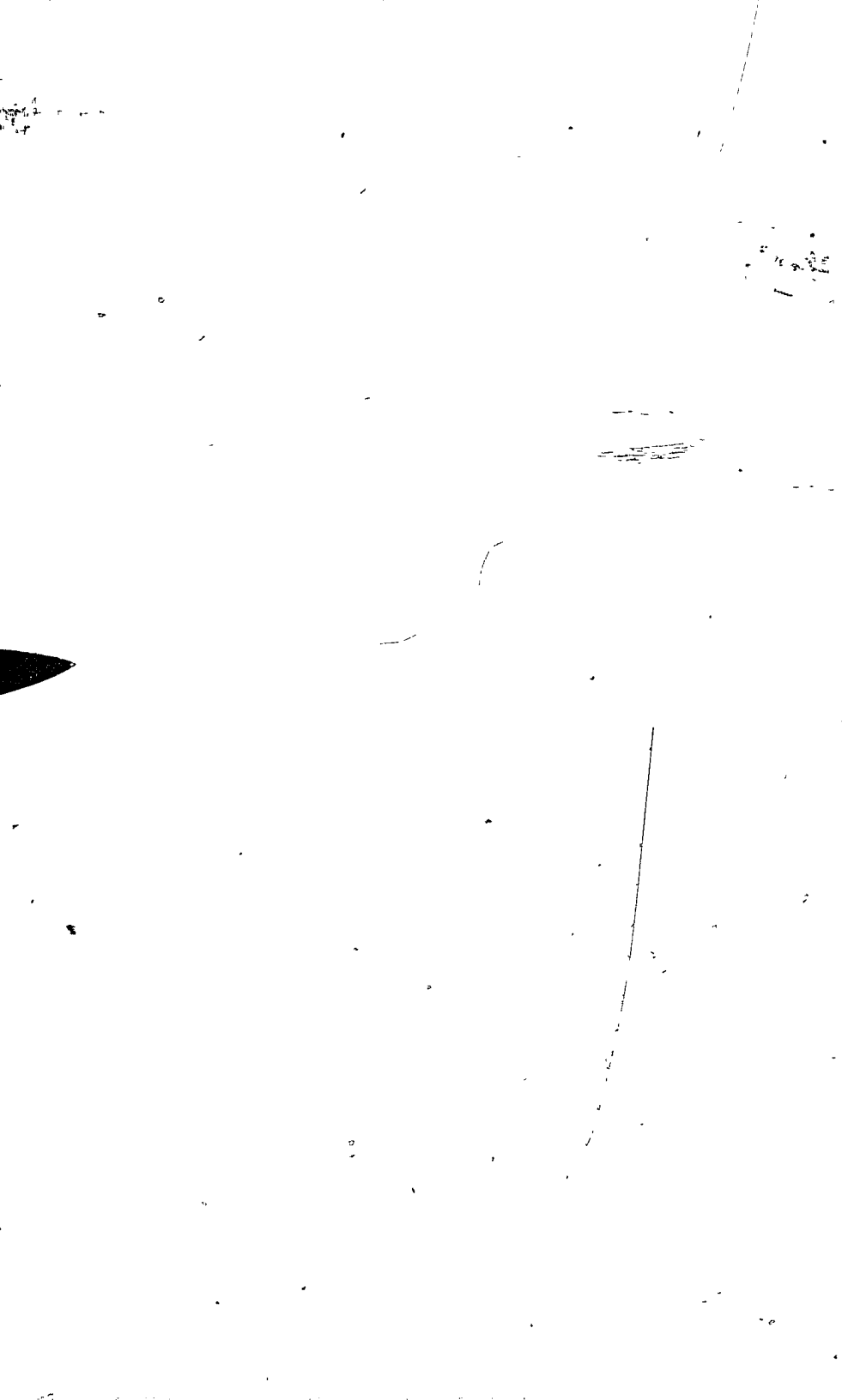
Many Presbyterians came to Red River at the time of the Selkirk Settlement, but it was not until 1852 that the first Presbyterian minister, Mr. Black, arrived in the country. In 1866, the Presbyterian Church of Canada sent out Mr. Nisbet to begin work among the Indians of the North-West. He was ably assisted by Hugh McKellar in the 'seventies, but before 1881 the Presbyterian Church did not realise the magnitude of its opportunity. In that year it appointed Dr. James Robertson Superintendent of Missions in Manitoba and the North-West, and under his energetic leadership the Church grew rapidly.

Thus, when the Hudson's Bay Territories passed to the Dominion various missionary bodies were already at work on the prairie, but as yet practically nothing of a permanent nature had been done for the Blackfeet and their allies the Sarsi. With the establishment by the Reverend George McDougall of a school near Morleyville in 1864, which was placed in charge of Dr. Very, a beginning was made among the Stonies. From the 'sixties to the end of the pioneer period and even afterwards, the history of Methodism in Southern Alberta is closely bound up with the history of the McDougall family.

George McDougall, who perished in a blizzard in 1875, and his son John were the kind of men who cannot be turned out by professional schools. They took up the work because they felt they were called to it, and they were trained for their task in the rude school of experience on the frontier.



THE REV. JOHN McDOUGALL, D.D.





They possessed other qualities besides missionary zeal and evangelical fervour, as was shown for example in 1869, when John McDougall was offered a Chief Clerkship in the Hudson's Bay Company and the management of Rocky Mountain House. After much thought he rejected this glittering prize, and he afterwards dated the beginning of his missionary career from the time of his refusal. Thanks to the beneficent influence of the McDougalls, the Stonies escaped the disastrous results of traffic with the whisky-traders, for the McDougalls encouraged them to take their furs to Rocky Mountain House and Edmonton, where they were exchanged for useful articles. On a visit to the Belly River district when the whisky-traders were in complete control, John McDougall was horrified by the scenes of degradation and violence which he witnessed, while George McDougall and Father Lacombe were united in their support of the North-West Council's demands that the Dominion Government should put a stop to this wicked traffic.

After his father's death John McDougall took up the work among the Stonies and was always very proud that in the Rebellion of 1885, not one of his braves took the war-path. With very little organised support, he did his missionary work in his own way. His eminently independent and fearless character rendered him a man well suited for the work he was to do, and thanks to him and men like him whom he had trained or guided, the foundations of Methodism were broadly laid. No one understood better than he did the difficulties and hardships of pioneer life, and his influence extended far beyond the circle of the Methodist fraternity. He was a familiar and welcome guest in Mounted Police barracks, ranch houses and settlers' shacks, from the mountains east to the Cypress Hills, and from the Red Deer south to the border.

About the same time that the Reverend Robert Rundle

arrived at Edmonton, Chief Factor Rowand invited Father Thibault (1842) to come to that fort to minister to the half-breeds and Crees in its vicinity. But, like the history of Methodism, the story of the Catholic Church in Southern Alberta is bound up with the character and achievements of one man, Father Lacombe, who would have been the last to claim such a distinction for himself. Father Lacombe was a French Canadian by birth, and he always claimed that he had some Indian blood in his veins, a fact which may have strengthened his sympathy with the aborigines. He first arrived at Red River in 1849, when he was only twenty-two years of age, and in 1852 was assigned to the Edmonton Mission field. His first work in the Far West was to establish St. Anne's Mission, which was situated about fifty miles above Fort Edmonton.

In 1857, the Blackfoot Indians, who at that time were suffering from an epidemic of scarlet fever, appealed to Lacombe to come to their aid. While attending them in response to this call, Lacombe contracted the disease himself, and by his devotion won a place in the hearts of these savages unsurpassed by any other white man. Thus began the long association of this remarkable man with the Indians of the South. In the years to come, although he was frequently called away to other work, he always returned to the Blackfeet when an opportunity offered, and at the end of his long and splendid life, it was among the half-breeds of the Bow River district, and in the country that he had loved so well, that he spent his last days. Of all the distinguished men whose memories Alberta should honour, there is none more worthy than this great Christian and gentleman.

When Bishop Taché was visiting St. Anne's, in 1859, a Blackfoot chief asked for a missionary to be sent among his people. He promised that the priest would not be hindered in his work, and that if he came the Blackfeet would make

no more war on their old enemies the Crees. Lacombe was very anxious to take up the work, and finally in 1865 was ordered to proceed across the prairies to the Blackfeet. For the next six years he lived among these Indians, travelling with them wherever they went, sharing their privations and taking as his parish all the prairie country as far east as the Forks of Saskatchewan, and from the north branch of that river south to the American boundary.

After that he was withdrawn to other labours, but was allowed, on the special request of the Indians, to be present as their counsellor and friend at the time of the signing of Treaty Number Seven. In 1880 he was appointed chaplain to the navvies in the construction camps, and his influence with the Blackfeet did much to prevent them from showing serious hostility to the railway. At last in 1882, after twelve years' absence, he was permitted to resume work among the Indians. On his return he found great changes, for the tragic experiences through which these unfortunate people had passed since 1870, had done much to break down their tribal organisation, undermine their stamina and make them suspicious, even of their friends. They were in no mood to listen to the white man's story of his God, when they remembered what the white man's coming had meant for them.

Lacombe among others, induced the Government to establish Indian schools, and did everything in his power to make their transition to the new settled life as easy as possible. When the rebellion broke out in 1885, the Government relied upon his great influence among the Blackfeet to prevent that turbulent people from taking the war-path, and his famous message to Sir John A. Macdonald proved that confidence to be justified. Later on, Lacombe turned his attention to the difficult task of training young half-breeds to be self-supporting. For this purpose he established a training colony, and in 1909, at a time of life when most men

would feel that their time for beginnings was past (he was then eighty-two) he founded a home for orphans and aged at Midnapore on Fish Creek. Father Lacombe's life is thus not only part and parcel of the story of the Catholic Church in the West, it is in a very real sense the history of the West itself. Fortunately for the Indians and half-breeds for whom he laboured, their faithful teacher and friend was also the respected adviser of such men as Lord Strathcona, Lord Mountstevens, Lord Lorne, Sir William Van Horne and the majority of Canadian public men interested in the West.

McDougall and Lacombe represented two types of missionary, for both of which there was a place in frontier society. One was a French-Canadian, the other the son of a Scottish Highland pioneer missionary. One was a humble priest trained to obey, a mere atom in the mighty organisation of the Roman Church, perhaps the greatest organisation the world has ever seen; the other an almost independent Christian teacher. Yet despite the profound dogmatic gulfs that divided them, these two men had much in common. They both consecrated their lives to work among the Indians, the half-breeds and settlers. They were both fearless in the face of danger, and what was of more importance in the practical, hard-headed, pioneering West, they both had more than the ordinary man's share of shrewd horse-sense.

As soon as the Blackfeet began to settle down on their reserves, John McLean, the Anglican Bishop of Saskatchewan, determined to begin work among them. The Reverend George Mackay was sent from Prince Albert to the Piegan in 1879, and the Reverend S. Trivett to the Bloods in the following year. Bishop McLean asked the Church Missionary Society, which had done such good work in Rupert's Land in the early days, to send a missionary to the Blackfeet, and fortunately for the country in which he was to labour, the choice of the Society fell upon the Reverend



THE REV. FATHER LACOMBE



J. W. Tims, then but recently ordained. He began work in 1883, and in 1885 was joined by the Reverend H. W. G. Stocken. In the following year work was begun among the Sarsi by the Reverend R. Inkster, who in 1887 handed the new mission over to Mr. Stocken, but this tribe has proved to be the most unresponsive to Christian influence of all the tribes of the south.

Butler observed on his journey through the West in 1871, that the two Protestant bodies then in the field, the Anglicans and the Methodists, wisely avoided overlapping. With the exception of the ten years 1881-1891, during which they both had missions among the Bloods, this convention has been respected ever since. Thus, while the Methodists continued to minister to the Crees and Stonies, the Anglicans made themselves responsible for the people of the Blackfoot Confederation.

With the exception of the Stonies, South Alberta Indians were hard to convert. Indeed, it proved impossible to turn the grown-up people from their ancient practices. It appears also that some of the missionaries were not fitted for their work, for a few of them were loud in their lamentations. These Jeremiahs seem to have been singularly lacking in imagination, for they were quite unable to make due allowance for the tragic history of the Indians in recent years, and for the magnitude of the change involved in the sudden transition from a hunting, nomadic life, to settled agricultural existence on the Reserves. One missionary described his particular Indians as "dishonest, untruthful and lazy, great gamblers and notorious beggars . . . steeped in heathen practices, and in the bad habits common alike to Indians and to white communities". Had this man attempted to understand these people and studied their history, he would soon have discovered that many actions deemed vicious and sinful by Christians, among the Indians had

been esteemed virtues. Apparently he expected these ignorant savages to be as reliable and as law-abiding as English artisans, and as sober and industrious as the most hard-working representatives of the solid British middle class. It was twenty years before any adults were baptized among the Bloods, and as late as 1907 the majority of them were still avowed heathens.

Archdeacon Tims however, was of a different mould and no such lachrymose diatribes emanated from him. His task was even more difficult than that of his colleagues to the south, since the Indians for whom he was responsible lived close to the main line of the railway, and were therefore open to a wide assortment of demoralising influences. At first he had great difficulty in overcoming the deep-rooted suspicion of the white men prevalent among his people, but in due course, with the exercise of great tact, patience and sympathy he won their confidence. Though they continued to be indifferent to the religion he taught, he was able to report at the end of seven years that some impression had been made, and that for the first time on record, the sun dance had been celebrated without torture. It was not until 1892 that the first convert was baptized among the Blackfeet, but in 1897 Daniel Littleaxe, one of the best of the minor chiefs, embraced the Christian faith. By 1907 there were a hundred and sixty baptized Indians in the district, while all had felt the influence of Christian teaching and thought.

Nothing has been said here about the actual founding of churches and the struggle of the pioneers to raise the money required for the buildings and church maintenance. As the country filled up, different Christian denominations established themselves, so that by 1905, Methodists, Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists and others, including the Mormons, were firmly established. Indeed, it could be said with a good deal of truth that the



country had too many churches, and that the cause of true religion was suffering in consequence. Many a small town had several religious bodies quite independent of each other, separated by no very important dogmatic distinctions, and all engaged in much the same work. This unnecessary overlapping was undesirable in an age when it was essential that Christian effort should be united to obtain the best results. It was partly in order to obviate this state of affairs that the scheme for a United Church of Canada was originally mooted and finally carried through.

In a pioneer missionary phase, men are more important than dogmas, for even the most highly organised Church must leave much to the personal initiative of its representative. McDougall, Lacombe, Robertson and Tims may be taken as examples of pioneer missionaries who possessed to an unusual degree the qualities required for their work. There were others, sometimes their ecclesiastical superiors, who may have equalled them, but none who surpassed them.

An account of missionary work in any part of the West which made no mention of the Catholic Nursing Sisters would be far from complete. Usually they were the first in the field with their hospitals, and their services were for all, irrespective of creed. Many an isolated Protestant settler has blessed these noble women, when their quiet, efficient care brought back a child or a wife from the jaws of death. Many a woman for whom the hard, unremitting toil of pioneer life was proving insupportable, can recall some kindly Sister or gracious Mother-Superior whose smile or flash of Irish wit has made all the difference between despair and hope. It is fitting that a country should remember its pioneers, and among the most deserving of remembrance by the people who live in the land which the pioneers made habitable, the Catholic Nursing Sisters must be numbered.

In education as in religion the Methodists were first to

begin work in the South, though the Roman Catholics were before them in the North. Father Scollop in 1862, began to teach the children of Edmonton in a room within the walls of the Fort. Two years later George McDougall established a school near Morleyville. In 1877 a school was built at Macleod. This institution appears to have had a short life, as one of the first subjects to which the *Macleod Gazette* drew attention, on its appearance in 1882, was the lack of school facilities. In 1883, the first Calgary school was opened in the Methodist church, and to it came children, both whites and half-breeds, from the whole district.

The school teacher in the pioneer days frequently had great difficulty in maintaining a semblance of order among the boisterous scholars. These children, who were growing up on the open range and who were accustomed to ride and herd cattle almost as soon as they could walk, tended to be as wild as the steers of the prairie and as impatient of discipline. Sometimes a gopher was led by his native curiosity to stray into the precincts consecrated to learning, and then there ensued a wild disturbance which reduced the class-room to chaos. The half-breed neophytes lost the veneer of civilisation that they were with such difficulty achieving, and the hunting instinct of their red ancestors asserted itself, while the white children were eager to follow their example. The horrified teacher, perhaps newly arrived from the East, stood aghast behind, or more frequently on the desk, while the wild hunt proceeded under the stove and over the benches, with rulers and pointers brought into play and slates and books as missiles, till at last the unfortunate gopher was captured, or escaped to the comparative peace of the prairie. Sometimes it was necessary to round up the children in order to maintain the required amount of school attendance, but often these round-ups were fruitless, for the children were as elusive as steers. In Pincher Creek for example,

the Government in 1889 withdrew the grant which it had made in the previous year, because, in spite of the most strenuous scholastic round-ups, school attendance was still insufficient.

Prior to 1884, schools were maintained in the North-West either by private local subscription, or by some one or other of the various religious bodies. At first the North-West Council had no funds available for this purpose, and in 1877 was obliged to reply to a petition for the establishment of a school that it was unable to do this, and apparently in order to conceal its weakness, it stated that it did not believe the time was ripe for such a departure.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after this however, the Lieutenant-Governor took up the subject with Ottawa. When no reply was received, he sent an urgent telegram in 1879, praying that the Dominion Government would act, and finally he received the sum of four thousand dollars, which was devoted partly to the payment of salaries and partly to the building of schools.<sup>2</sup> The position however, remained unsatisfactory down to 1884, when the Territories were made responsible for the administration of this important subject.

After that year, as the Government-provided schools increased in number, the mission schools tended to die out, and in 1905 there were only a very few of them left. These received grants from the provincial Boards of Education, similar to those which they had received previously from the Dominion. The Federal Government continued to be responsible for Indian schools, by co-operating as before, with the missionary bodies which organised them.

Much of the discussion on educational questions throughout the whole period, centred round considerations of religion and language. The reason for this is twofold. For several

<sup>1</sup> *Journals, North-West Council, 1877, p. 24.*

<sup>2</sup> Blue, *Alberta Past and Present*, p. 281

years after the transfer of Rupert's Land to the Dominion, the Catholic French-speaking element, half-breed and French-Canadian, constituted a considerable portion of the population. This fact rendered their demand for separate schools more reasonable, even from the English-speaking Protestants' point of view, than it afterwards was when the French-speaking element had become a negligible quantity. A more fundamental reason for the protracted and sometimes bitter discussions on questions of education, arose from the essential difference in outlook of Catholic and Protestant. The Roman Church has always taught that any education worthy of the name, cannot be considered as separate and distinct from religion, for it holds that the training of the mind and the development of the soul are inextricably bound together. This being so, it is, according to the Catholics, obviously wicked to expose young children during the most susceptible period of human life, to avowedly secular or even heretical influences. The Protestant on the other hand, believes that secular education, designed to train the child for the work of life and the responsibilities of citizenship, can be given without reference to any particular belief or dogma. Both of these positions are tenable, but as one is the negation of the other and there is no common ground between them, argument is not only useless but positively harmful.

The aim of the much-disputed Section Ninety-three of the British North America Act, seems to have been to give the provinces complete control of education, subject to the recognition of the rights of religious or linguistic minorities. In 1867, the Roman Catholic minority in Ontario and the Protestant minority in Quebec, were the only two seriously considered, for no one foresaw at that time that before the close of the century, several others would make their appearance. The Act of 1875 was designed to carry out the in-

tention of 1867: "The Legislature of the said . . . province shall pass all necessary laws in respect of education and . . . it shall therein always be provided (a) that a majority of the ratepayers in any district or portion of the said province or of any less portion or subdivision thereof, by whatever name it is known, may establish such schools therein as they think fit, and may make the necessary assessments and collection of rates therefor, and (b) that the minority of the ratepayers therein, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, may establish separate schools therein, and make the necessary assessment and collection of rates therefor, and (c) that in such case the ratepayers establishing such Protestant or Roman Catholic separate schools shall be liable only to assessment of such rates as they impose upon themselves with respect thereto."<sup>1</sup>

When the North-West Territories Bill was before the Senate in 1875, some members strongly objected to the education clause. The reply of the Government was that the Territories were on an entirely different footing from fully organised provinces, and that the principle of the Bill was that the Territories should receive the type of education for which they were prepared to pay. This was in fact, what happened, for during the next nine years such schools as did exist in the country, were largely maintained by voluntary effort or by different religious bodies. Thus, when in 1884 the Territories took over the administration of education, Roman Catholic and Protestant schools were already established, and were developing quite independently along separate lines.

The present system of education dates from 1884, when the North-West Council passed its first ordinance dealing with this subject. This provided for the establishment of a system of education similar to that of Quebec. There was

<sup>1</sup> North-West Territories Act, 1875, 38 Vic. cap. 49.

to be a Board of Education composed of a Catholic and a Protestant section, each of which was permitted to work independently of the other. Thus, there were virtually two Boards of Education, two curricula, two sets of textbooks, two inspectorates, two standards for teachers, two systems of training teachers, two sets of school buildings and two systems of district organisation and assessment. Opposition at once arose to this ordinance, but in 1885, after a heated discussion, the Council by a majority of two resolved that a Board of Education should be set up, composed of two Roman Catholic and two Protestant members, with the Lieutenant-Governor as Chairman, and it was agreed that two of the four members were to be members of the Council. From 1885 to 1901, successive ordinances passed by the North-West Legislature resulted in the elimination of sectarianism from the educational system.

As soon as the North-West Legislative Assembly came into existence, it showed a pronounced bias in this direction. It had however, already been settled in 1875, that no ratepayer should be obliged to support both a Catholic and a Protestant school, but that all ratepayers must support one or the other. Such time as the Legislature could spare from its constitutional struggle with the Lieutenant-Governor, it devoted largely to education. Various petitions from the Assembly, as well as from groups of private citizens, were sent to Ottawa, asking that the Territorial Legislature should be given a completely free hand in respect to educational policy, and these appeals found ready champions in Parliament. The subject was brought up in the Canadian House of Commons in 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893 and on many subsequent occasions. The various Bills introduced in these years whose effect would have been to confer complete control of the educational system upon the Territorial Legislature were all rejected.

Finally in 1892, the North-West Assembly passed certain ordinances which virtually terminated the influence of clericalism, but although these ordinances produced violent counter-petitions, Sir John Thompson refused to disallow them. The Board of Education was abolished and the Territorial Government became directly responsible for education, through a body styled the Council of Public Instruction, which consisted of the Executive Committee of the Legislative Assembly, together with four co-opted members without votes, two Protestant and two Catholic. The policy of the Council of Public Instruction was carried out by a Superintendent of Education. In 1901, the Executive Council became responsible for education through one of its own members, while the co-opted nominees formed an Educational Council, a body with purely advisory powers on such subjects as text-books, courses of study, licensing of teachers and inspection.

In the meantime the establishment of schools and the organisation of school districts had proceeded rapidly, as the following figures show:

North-West Territories.	Public.		Separate.		Total.
	Protestant.	Catholic.	Catholic.	Protestant.	
1885	48	10	1	..	59
1891	210	33	11	..	254
1895	..	..	..	..	..
1901	697		16		713
1905	1451		16		1467

Compulsory education was established by the North-West Council in 1888. This provided for the compulsory attendance at school of all children between the ages of seven and twelve for a minimum period of three months in the year, and also required schools to be kept open for the whole year

in districts where fifteen children of school age lived within a radius of one and a half miles, and for six months where there were only ten children fulfilling these requirements.

Provision was made for secondary instruction by the establishment of the so-called union schools. The trustees were to provide high school facilities where two or more adjacent schools employed not less than three teachers, and had an aggregate daily attendance of sixty pupils, fifteen of whom must have passed the high school entrance examination. In addition to their public and high school work, the Principals of the union schools were expected to provide "normal" teaching, and were assisted in this by the Inspectors. The first union schools were established at Calgary and Regina in 1888. The question of a Territorial university or universities was discussed by the North-West Legislative Assembly shortly after it came into existence, and various proposals were made on this subject before 1905.

Thus from 1892, a uniform system of education was developed in the Territories, and by 1905 the only difference between a Protestant and a Catholic school was that when the trustees were Protestants the religious instruction given between 3.30 and 4 in the afternoon was Protestant, while when they were Catholics, such instruction during that period would be Catholic. Although this arrangement was not wholly satisfactory, it was at least a working compromise, for any other solution of the problem would probably have entailed surrenders so substantial as to render it unacceptable to one side or the other.

Closely linked with the question of separate schools was the problem of dual language. The use of both French and English was legalised in 1875, but in the course of the next twenty years the population became overwhelmingly English in speech, so that there was no longer any justification for maintaining such a cumbrous system. In 1889, the North-



West Legislative Assembly petitioned the Dominion Government to discontinue the system of dual language, an action which was supported by many private petitions, including one signed by the citizens of Calgary. In January 1892, Mr. Haultain moved that the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly should thereafter be published in the English language only.<sup>1</sup>

The subject was hotly debated in the Dominion Parliament, and eventually it was agreed that the onus of taking action in the matter should be left to the North-West Legislature itself. In effect, this meant that the dual language system was eliminated both from Territorial politics and Territorial education. Indeed, it was fortunate that this decision was arrived at so early, for before many years had passed, other linguistic minorities had appeared who also demanded that their language should be taught in the schools. In his report for 1898, the Superintendent of Education for the Territories wrote: "One of our most serious and pressing educational problems arises from the settlement amongst us of so many foreign nationalities in the block or colony system. There are colonies of Swedes, Finns, Bohemians, Hungarians, Jews, Austrians, Germans, Russians, Icelanders, Muscovites, Galicians and Doukhobors."<sup>2</sup> This at once raised difficult educational problems, for if the system of dual language had been in existence, it would have proved difficult to resist the demands of these people that the instruction of their children should be given in their native tongue. Under the ordinance of 1892, it was enjoined that all instruction should be conducted in English, but when the trustees in a particular district desired it, primary courses in the French language could also be given.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the North-West Legislative Assembly*, 1891, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Murray, *History of Education in Saskatchewan*, quoted in *Canada and its Provinces*, vol. xx. p. 458.

In 1901, it was estimated that three out of every eleven people in the Territories spoke a language other than French or English. Clearly it was not desirable that their children should be completely divorced from their native cultures, and lose all contact with the peoples from whom they were sprung. All these aliens had their own contributions to make to the Canadian nation of the future, and the question the Territorial Government was called upon to decide was how could this best be done, and at the same time, ensure that the children would grow up as Canadians. In 1901 therefore, it was wisely decided that for the future those who desired instruction in any language other than French or English should be allowed to have it, provided they were prepared to impose upon themselves a special assessment for this purpose, engage a competent teacher, refrain from interfering with the regular school routine, and to limit such teaching to composition, grammar and reading. At the same time, it was agreed that French might be taught at any time during school hours, and that it might be paid for out of regular school funds, a decision which was perfectly right and proper, as French is the mother tongue of so many Canadians. The dual language question was raised for the last time in 1905, during the debate on the Alberta Bill. But when the measure passed into law, it continued the system then in existence.

The warmest debates on this Bill occurred on the subject of education. It appears that the draftsmen of the Alberta Bill embodied almost verbatim the provisions contained in the Act of 1875, ignorant of the fact that in the intervening period the Territories had developed an educational system of their own. Though no breach of the law had actually occurred, the educational system which had grown up was very different from the Quebec system, which apparently the legislators in 1875 had had in mind. Sir

Wilfrid Laurier favoured the idea of separate schools and defended it in principle. Though he was supported in the main by the Catholic members, his proposal aroused a storm of opposition, and moreover, as it led to the resignation of Sir Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, one of his ablest lieutenants, the objectionable clause was amended. The Opposition attacked the idea of separate schools, and claimed that the new province should be given a completely free hand on the subject of education. Such men as Mr. Bourassa however, defended the general principle of separate schools, and he urged that they were particularly desirable in the case of the new provinces about to be created, whose Legislatures, he asserted, could not be trusted to treat the Catholics fairly. Sir Robert Borden took his stand on the rock of provincial rights, but throughout the whole debate it is impossible not to feel that a good deal of the opposition arose from the fact that, according to parliamentary usage, the duty of the Opposition was to oppose.

As a whole, the Western members were not particularly interested in this question, and indeed, were divided in their opinions. For them the question of Crown lands and the settlement of financial relations between the Dominion and the new province were vastly more important, and Mr. W. Scott believed that too much time had been wasted on what he considered to be a purely sentimental question.<sup>1</sup> Finally, it was agreed that the system of education recognised under the terms of Chapters 29 and 30 of the ordinances of 1901 should be continued, and so the bogey of separate schools was quietly laid away.

By the North-West Territories Act of 1875, it was provided that Sections Eleven and Twenty-nine in each township should be set aside for schools. Like other Crown lands in the prairie, these school reservations were administered by

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1905, vol. v. p. 3592.

the Dominion Government, and it was provided that they should be sold by auction, but only when neighbouring lands commanded a good price. Education was thus placed on a sound financial footing, and provided that the proceeds from these sales were properly invested and the interest only drawn upon, future educational development in the Territories was rendered secure.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE EVOLUTION OF REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS, 1870-1888

THE political and constitutional history of Southern Alberta before 1905, cannot be considered apart from that of the Territories as a whole. In 1870, it is literally true to say that no government existed in the North-West, since the feeble rule of the Hudson's Bay Company was over and the time had not yet come when the Dominion was to make her control effective. However, during the next thirty-five years, the country passed through the various stages on the road to full responsible government and provincial status. Compared with eastern Canada, the evolution was not only more rapid, it was more peaceful, for the battle of responsible government had already been won before the Territories were organised. The Rebellion of 1885 certainly embittered racial feeling; and in the existence of large tracts of land, reserved from settlement and controlled by private corporations, the Territories were confronted with a problem similar to that of the Clergy Reserves, but it was happily free from the poison of religious bigotry. Thus, although the spectres of sectarian prejudice and racial antagonism, so familiar in the political development of the eastern provinces, appeared from time to time to darken councils, they never aroused such bitterness in the North-West Territories, nor caused such divisions as those for which they were responsible in the East.

As the population in the early days was overwhelmingly

British or Canadian, and therefore understood the working of self-governing institutions, there was no need for a long political apprenticeship. Such controversy as did occur during the period, was conducted by the Territorial representatives with skill and moderation, and if the country had filled up more rapidly, the establishment of provincial Governments would have come even earlier.

Inextricably bound up with the demand for responsible government, was the question of the financial relations between Canada and the Territories. Though it seems evident that the authorities at Ottawa were genuinely anxious to place these on an equitable basis, the rapid growth of the Territorial population, particularly in the later years, and sometimes the exigencies of party warfare, made such adjustments difficult. Further, as the people of the North-West became politically conscious, another question new to Canadian history, obtruded itself, and the bitterness it aroused shows what might have happened if Lord Durham's recommendation, that Crown lands should be administered by Great Britain, had been carried into effect. When the Territories passed to Canada in 1870, the Dominion assumed control of Crown lands, which it claimed to hold in trust for the Canadian people. This at once placed the new province of Manitoba and the Territories in a different relationship to the Dominion, from that which existed between it and the older provinces. As they assumed more and more control of their own government, the people naturally claimed the right to control their Crown lands, but this problem was not settled during the period under review, and still awaits solution.

It was provided by the Manitoba Act of 1870, that the Lieutenant-Governor of the new province should also act as Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories.<sup>1</sup> He was to receive an additional honorarium and was to be advised

<sup>1</sup> 33 Vic. cap. 3, sec. 35, May 12, 1870.

by a nominated Council. On May 20 1870, Adams G. Archibald was appointed the first Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, but his Council was not gazetted till December 28 1872. The first Legislature was not without its Gilbertian side. Both the Governor and the majority of his Council had never even seen the country they were supposed to govern, and do not appear to have shown any pronounced desire to do so. Although the white population of the Territories was only a few hundreds, it was found necessary to have a Council of 11, later increased to 21 and afterwards to 26, a number sufficiently large to include most of the leading men of Manitoba. The title Honourable thus became almost as common in that province as was the rank of Colonel in the United States after the Civil War.

This Council was however, a makeshift, and it soon transpired that Ottawa took little interest in it or its work. Hence in 1874, it expostulated with the Dominion Government for not paying more attention to its resolutions: "This Council deeply regrets that the Privy Council has not been pleased to communicate their approval or disapproval of the legislation and many resolutions adopted by the Council at their meetings held on the 4th, 8th, 11th, and 13th September 1873, 11th, 12th, 14th, 16th March and 1st and 2nd June 1874, and they respectfully represent that such long delay has paralysed the action of the Council."<sup>1</sup>

In 1875 this body ceased to exist, and an Act was passed by the Canadian Government which became the foundation of all subsequent constitutional development of the Territories.<sup>2</sup> This measure provided that they should be administered under a Crown Colony form of government; a small official Council of five<sup>3</sup> was substituted for the

<sup>1</sup> Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> The North-West Territories Act, 1875, 38 Vic. cap. 49.

<sup>3</sup> By 40 Vic. cap. 7, this was increased to six.

unwieldy body that had been in existence since 1873, while the legislative and executive functions of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council were increased. Other sections provided for the establishment of a Legislative Assembly when the population of the Territories should justify such a step, the creation of municipal institutions, and a system of education which allowed for separate schools. Under this measure, the Lieutenant-Governor became an administrative official, appointed by the Governor-General-in-Council and advised by the Council of Five. He was also, subject to the confirmation of the Privy Council, a legislative power, as he was authorised to make ordinances affecting various local and municipal subjects, as well as property, civil rights, public health, police, roads and highways.

Sir John A. Macdonald attacked that part of the Act which provided for the establishment of a Territorial Government, entirely independent of Manitoba. He believed that this would entail unnecessary expense and duplication, but the Government rightly held that it would prove impossible in practice to administer the Territories effectively from Winnipeg.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, another Act sowed the seeds of future trouble by sanctioning the use of French as well as English in courts, debates, reports and ordinances of the Council.<sup>2</sup>

The Act of 1875 also vested the administration of justice in the Lieutenant-Governor, provided for the appointment of stipendiary magistrates, introduced a modified jury system and gave the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench appellate jurisdiction. In 1886, this was transferred to the Supreme Court of the North-West Territories.<sup>3</sup> The powers of the stipendiary magistrates were increased in 1877, and

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1875, p. 656.

<sup>2</sup> 40 Vic. cap. 7, sec. 11, and Senate Debates, 1877, pp. 318, 436.

<sup>3</sup> 49 Vic. cap. 25.



the jurisdiction of the judges of the Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba in respect of crimes committed in the Territories, punishable with more than seven years' imprisonment, was done away with, jurisdiction in like cases being vested in a stipendiary magistrate and a justice of the peace, together with a jury of six. In capital cases, a stipendiary magistrate and two justices were empowered to hear and to decide the same.<sup>1</sup> A few minor alterations were introduced in 1880,<sup>2</sup> and in 1884 appeals from Justices of the Peace to Stipendiaries were provided for.<sup>3</sup> In 1886, a Supreme Court for the Territories ("a Supreme Court of record of original and appellate jurisdiction") replaced the District Stipendiary Courts,<sup>4</sup> and the country was divided into five judicial districts.

On October 7, 1876, the Hon. David Laird was appointed the first independent Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories, and on March 8, 1877, he opened his first Council at Fort Livingstone on Swan River. The seat of government was transferred in the following August to Battleford, and in 1883 it was once more moved, this time to Regina, where it remained until the separate provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan came into existence. The new Council at once showed itself to be a more efficient body than its predecessor. Its activities extended over a wide field, ranging from the careless use of poison in killing wolves and measures for the protection of buffalo, to regulations affecting the spread of infectious diseases and the legalisation of civil marriages. But its work was very much hampered by lack of money, and as early as 1879, the *Saskatchewan Herald* of Battleford, the pioneer Territorial journal, sounded a note that was to become only too familiar to politicians,

<sup>1</sup> 40 Vic. cap. 7, and *Canada and its Provinces*, vol. xx. p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> 43 Vic. cap. 25.

<sup>3</sup> 47 Vic. cap. 23.

<sup>4</sup> 49 Vic. cap. 25.

both in the West and at Ottawa during the next twenty years: "It is about time the people of the Territories who contribute largely to the general revenue of the Dominion, should at least have the allowance of eighty cents per capita of the population which is granted to the Provinces for local purposes."<sup>1</sup>

The Act of 1880 was, among other things, designed to strengthen the Dominion's control over Territorial legislation. In continuation of a provision in the Act of 1875,<sup>2</sup> one section of the 1880 Act required that all Territorial ordinances, before coming into effect, must be ratified by the Governor-General-in-Council, to which body they were to be submitted within thirty days after their passing by the Territorial legislature. All ordinances so agreed to or rejected were then to be placed before Parliament for further consideration, and the final decision reported back to the Lieutenant-Governor. These regulations however, did not end the evil of procrastination on the part of Ottawa, of which the North-West Council had complained ever since 1874.

Another section of the Act of 1875 was also reaffirmed in 1880, when the Act of that year provided that when any district of the North-West Territories not exceeding a thousand square miles in area, contained not less than a thousand fully qualified citizens, an electoral district should be set up, which should thereafter be represented in the Council or the Legislative Assembly as the case might be, by a member elected by itself.<sup>3</sup> When the total number of elected members had reached twenty-one, the nominated Council was to be replaced by a Legislative Assembly, to be

<sup>1</sup> Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> By the Act of 1875, 38 Vic. cap. 49, all Territorial ordinances had to be reported within ten days of their passing to the Governor-General, and might be disallowed by him at any time within two years of their passing. All ordinances had to be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

<sup>3</sup> 43 Vic. cap. 25, sec. 15

re-elected every two years. This Act however, did not materially affect the office of the Lieutenant-Governor, who remained the real executive power, and was in reality merely the instrument of the Dominion Government. The first to take a seat in the Council as an elected member was Lawrence Clarke, chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company at Carlton, who entered the House in 1881 as the representative of Lorne. In the following year, mainly for the convenience of the postal department, the Territories were divided into the four provisional districts of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, Athabasca and Alberta.

Lieutenant-Governor Laird, after a very successful administration, during which he had shown unequalled powers in dealing with the Indians, retired in December 1881, and was succeeded by Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney, an English civil engineer who had already seen something of Western political life. In August, 1883, he met his first Council, which contained in addition to the nominated members, six elected members, one of whom, Mr. Frank Oliver, came from Edmonton, the first electoral district to be set up in Alberta. After this, the influence of the elected members grew steadily at the expense of the nominated element. In the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, the Council expressed the desire for greater legislative scope, and also prayed that it would be subjected to less interference from Ottawa than had been customary. It also reverted to an old grievance, and asked that the Dominion Government in the future would pay more attention to its protests.<sup>1</sup> This preliminary demonstration of independence was followed up during the session by a memorial, addressed to the Governor-General, which enumerated sixteen grievances under which the Council laboured on account of inattention on the part of Ottawa. It is noteworthy that this document

<sup>1</sup> Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, p. 230.

contained a plea for the half-breeds of the Saskatchewan which, if acted upon at the time, might have prevented the financial loss and the unnecessary bloodshed of '85. It also contained a strong protest against the land policy of the Dominion, and closed with a demand for Territorial representation in the Dominion Parliament.<sup>1</sup> Such memorials as this however, had little immediate effect; and for several years after 1883, the Federal Government appears to have regarded the demands of the Territorial legislature, in the same light in which an indulgent parent looks upon the unreasonable pretensions of a spoilt child.

As the number of elected members increased, a growing hostility against the existence of official nominated members manifested itself. Thus in 1884, two elected members proposed a resolution that: "No person, not directly responsible to the people of the North-West, should be allowed a vote in local legislation or a seat at the Council Board". This was however, defeated, and the Council passed another resolution, in which it deprecated the introduction of Dominion party politics into Territorial affairs. Nevertheless, the fact that such a resolution was introduced, and the fact that it found some support in the House, showed the direction in which public opinion was beginning to move.<sup>2</sup>

With the election of Geddes to the Council in 1884 by the district of Calgary, Southern Alberta entered the political arena, and soon after this the other districts of the South also had their representatives at Regina. In 1885, the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, protested vigorously against the Dominion Government's undue solicitude and care for the Canadian Pacific Railway, on account of the exemption of lands granted to them from taxation.<sup>3</sup> But once more

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 232.

<sup>2</sup> *Journals of the N.W. Council*, 1884, pp. 61-2; Black, *op. cit.* p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> *Journals of the N.W. Council*, 1885, p. 44; Black, *op. cit.* p. 239.

these protests were unheeded, and in the same year a delegation, the first of many, was sent by the North-West legislature to Ottawa.<sup>1</sup> The memorial laid by these members before the Governor-General-in-Council contained no less than twenty-seven grievances, some of which were of slight importance, but others were genuinely serious. From that time Parliament Hill at Ottawa became for Territorial politicians what Downing Street had been to an earlier generation of Canadian public men, and the authorities at the capital appeared to the men from the West as dilatory, as evasive and as autocratic as "Mr. Mother-Country" himself had formerly been. This first delegation from the Territories appears to have been more than usually persuasive, or else the authorities at Ottawa were exceptionally pliant, but whatever the cause may have been, the Lieutenant-Governor was able to announce at the opening of the next session of the Council, that of the twenty-seven subjects mentioned in their recent memorial, seventeen had been agreed to, and the others were being dealt with in a manner satisfactory to him, but whether it was satisfactory to the Council or not does not appear.<sup>2</sup>

As early as 1884, when the number of elected members was eight as against the six nominated members, the Council turned its attention to the subject of local self-government. A motion was proposed that the Council should assert its right to the legislative and executive control of all matters relating to the government of the North-West Territories, similar to that exercised by representative legislative bodies throughout the British Empire. On the ground that it represented the people of the North-West, this motion demanded that the Council should be allowed to administer the funds voted by the Canadian Parliament for the use of the Territories, rather than a Lieutenant-Governor who was

<sup>1</sup> *Journals of the N.W. Council*, 1885, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1886, p. 8.

merely the instrument of Federal control. This first demand for local self-government also asked for an increased Federal Grant, and it is significant that one of the reasons urged in support of this request, was the fact that the Dominion had retained Territorial Crown lands in its own control.<sup>1</sup> Later on in the same session another resolution stated that, although the required number of elected members had not yet been attained, the Council should nevertheless at once be replaced by a Legislative Assembly.<sup>2</sup> Though both of these resolutions were rejected, they showed clearly that the days of autocratic Crown Colony Government in the Territories were numbered.

A memorial of 1886 put forward the specific demand for local self-government. It stated that the Council believed that the time had now come when it should be replaced by a purely elective Legislative Assembly of twenty-five members, holding office for a period of four years and presided over by one of its own members, and that the Lieutenant-Governors should carry on the business of government by and with the advice of an Executive Council of three.<sup>3</sup> The Lieutenant-Governor announced in his speech at the opening of the Council of 1887, that the Dominion Government had requested him to confer with his colleagues on the subject of a constitution for the Territories, which would give the people a greater share in the government of the country than they had hitherto enjoyed. Thereupon the Council at once presented another memorial, virtually repeating the demand of the previous year. Finally, in 1888, an Act was passed by the Dominion Parliament which conferred upon the Territories some of the privileges they had demanded, but subsequent events soon proved that these concessions fell far short of their requirements.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1884, pp. 47-50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1887, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1884, pp. 60-63.

<sup>4</sup> 51 Vic. cap. 19.

The new Legislative Assembly which now replaced the North-West Council was not a purely elective body, as three of its, twenty-five members were official nominees. It was intended that these official members (who might be nominated from the territorial judiciary) should act as legal experts, but while they could take part in the debates of the Assembly, they had no vote. The Act conferred upon the Assembly certain powers analogous to those of provinces, but, as the history of the next few years was to show, the constitutional position of the Assembly was inferior to that of Provincial Legislatures in many important particulars. An Advisory Council was provided for, composed of four members of the Assembly and the Lieutenant-Governor, who, in addition to his vote as a regular member, had also a casting vote. The powers of committee were limited to advice on financial matters, and it was not intended to be a cabinet.<sup>1</sup>

But while the North-West Council was thus fighting the battle of local self-government, it was not unmindful of wider political issues. In the Reply to the Address from the Throne of 1885, it was pointed out that the Territories were largely peopled by British subjects, familiar with the rights and privileges of British citizenship, and it stated that they were growing restive when they found those rights and privileges withheld. "We confidently look forward to the next session of the Federal Parliament granting our requests, and calling to their councils representatives of these Territories."<sup>2</sup>

The subject of Territorial representation was first raised in the Dominion House of Commons in 1884 by Mr. M. C. Cameron, member for West Huron, Ontario.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Cameron's first motion was thrown out, but, undaunted by this reverse,

<sup>1</sup> 51 Vic. cap. 19, sec. 13; Canadian Hansard, 1888, vol. i. p. 454; vol. ii. pp. 1174, 1473, 1480, 1547.

<sup>2</sup> *Journals of the N.W. Council*, 1885, pp. 43-4; Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1884, vol. i. p. 75; vol. ii. pp. 1138-58.

he returned to the charge once more in 1885.<sup>1</sup> He reminded the House that a memorial on this subject had already been presented by the North-West Council, and asked for copies of the correspondence between Ottawa and Regina to be tabled. He then quoted in full certain resolutions which had been passed in the previous November, by an avowedly non-political meeting held in the town of Calgary. These resolutions stated that the rapid increase in the population of the Territories, and their extraordinary economic development, justified the demand for representation at Ottawa, and the Dominion Government was asked to take immediate steps in this direction.<sup>2</sup>

The debate on Mr. Cameron's Bill was adjourned and the measure dropped, but he returned to the subject again in later speeches during the same session.<sup>3</sup> Speaking for the Government, Sir Hector Langevin said that Mr. Cameron's Bill was premature, and he asked the House to wait until the completion of the census of the Territories then being taken, when he said, further developments could be considered. The Territories were not yet organised as provinces, and on a recent visit to the North-West he had not found any general wish among the people for a change in their constitution.<sup>4</sup> The Opposition however, was not convinced by the Government's attitude, and in the same session Mr. Blake elicited from Sir John A. Macdonald the fact that he had received not one, but several, petitions from the people of Calgary and other districts of Alberta, on this and other questions.<sup>5</sup> Having taken it up, the Liberals took every opportunity of pressing the subject of Territorial representation upon the attention of the Government, until it decided that the time had come to act.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1885, vol. i. p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1885, vol. iv. pp. 3405 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1885, vol. ii. p. 1306.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1885, vol. i. pp. 292, 490-5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1885, vol. iv. p. 3405.



The Speech from the Throne of 1886, announced that the census of the Territories had been completed, and that Parliament would be asked to consider a measure providing for the representation of the North-West in the House of Commons. Apparently the Council at Regina was not satisfied with this announcement, and the delegation which visited Ottawa in that year emphasised the necessity for Parliamentary representation, both in the Senate and in the House of Commons.<sup>1</sup> Before the end of the session their demand was satisfied by the passing of the North-West Territories Representation Act, 1886.<sup>2</sup> This measure gave two representatives to Assiniboia and one each to Saskatchewan and Alberta.<sup>3</sup> In the following year the Territories were given two seats in the Senate, and thus by 1888 the North-West had already moved far along the path of its political development.<sup>4</sup>

While the Territories had thus in the course of a few years experienced rapid political changes, it should not be assumed that the people as a whole had shown any keen interest in political questions. The population of the country was still almost microscopic in the vast stretches of the prairie, so that it was almost impossible to say at any moment what the political opinions of the country were, and politicians who visited different parts of this great region might well find people holding the most diverse opinions, which could be cited in the East as representing the universal wish of the people, without fear of contradiction. Undoubtedly the Press, which began to develop during the 'eighties, did much to focus public opinion on questions of

<sup>1</sup> *Journals of the N.W. Council*, 1886, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> 49 Vic. cap. 24, and Canadian Hansard, 1886, vol. ii. pp. 866, 1143, 1205, 1223, 1249, 1271.

<sup>3</sup> 49 Vic. cap. 24, sections 2 and 3. In 1904 the number of representatives was increased to ten.

<sup>4</sup> 50-51 Vic. cap. 3, and Canadian Hansard, 1887, vol. i. pp. 74, 197, 246, 301.

general interest, but in a new country, where men are busily engaged in making homes and in the constant struggle with the forces of nature, there is little time for politics. So long as the Mounted Police were at hand to maintain the law, so long as the price of beef was good and new markets were being developed, the people as a whole were content to leave politics to those who had nothing better to do. When more important business was not on hand, they were quite prepared to applaud their representatives in Regina, to attend public meetings and to sign memorials to the Federal Government on what they were told by those who specialised in such things, were political grievances.

## CHAPTER XVII

### RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT AND PROVINCIAL STATUS; 1880-1905

BETWEEN 1880 and 1905, the question of Responsible Government and the demand for Provincial Status held the centre of the political stage in the North-West. Other subjects of common interest, such as that of separate schools, the dual language problem, the control of Crown Lands, immigration and taxation, tended to group themselves round one or other of these two main topics. In point of time, the demand for responsible government was the first to claim public attention, for as soon as the newly constituted Assembly met, a spirited contest, which was to last through several sessions, broke out between the Lieutenant-Governor and that body.

It soon became clear that there was a wide divergence of opinion between His Honour and the Assembly as to the functions of the Advisory Council.<sup>1</sup> The Lieutenant-Governor looked upon it merely as a committee whose advice he might seek on financial questions only, but which he was not necessarily bound to follow. The Legislative Assembly however, held that the Advisory Council was vested with the rights of a fully qualified Cabinet, responsible to itself alone. Inadvertently, at the close of the session of 1888, the Lieutenant-Governor played into the hands of the Assembly, by allowing it to include in its financial measure for the year, not only the funds raised by Territorial taxation, but also the sum voted by the Dominion Parliament for

<sup>1</sup> North-West Territories Act, 1888, 51 Vic. cap. 19, sec. xiii.

the government of the Territories. The Speaker presented the money bill for the year in customary Parliamentary language, but he did not draw the Governor's attention to the fact that some of the moneys mentioned therein came from the Dominion Treasury, and the Lieutenant-Governor thereupon pronounced the Royal assent, thus, according to the Assembly, tacitly acknowledging its right to full financial control. "His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor doth thank Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, accepts their benevolence and assents to this bill in Her Majesty's name."<sup>1</sup>

During the recess the Governor discovered that "Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects" had outwitted him, and when the Assembly met in 1889, he was determined not to be caught napping a second time. He found it necessary before the session was over to refuse the advice of his Council, and thus made it plain that he did not consider that the Act of 1888 had established full responsible government in the Territories. The Assembly however, did not intend that the fruits of its victory should be thrown away, and Mr. Cayley asked the members of the Advisory Council if they had informed the Lieutenant-Governor of their desire to be allowed, as his advisers, to prepare with him the estimates for the year 1889-90, which should be submitted to the Assembly before being transmitted to Ottawa. In reply, Mr. Haultain stated that His Honour could not consent to the publication of these estimates to the Assembly or otherwise, before they had been submitted to Ottawa. Therefore, as the Advisory Council believed itself to be a regularly constituted executive committee responsible to the Assembly, it tendered its resignation, which Lieutenant-Governor Royal accepted on October 29, 1889.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, p. 396.

<sup>2</sup> Oliver, E. H., *The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records*, vol. ii. pp. 1101, 1102.

Another Advisory Council was at once formed, but in his first speech to the Assembly, the new leader, Mr. Brett, implied that he had surrendered the position which the Assembly had won in the previous session. He said he would deal only with Territorial finance, which meant that he would not touch the money voted by the Dominion Parliament for the use of the Territories.<sup>1</sup> Thereupon the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution of "no confidence" in the Advisory Council, and Mr. Brett and his colleagues offered their resignations to the Lieutenant-Governor, but the latter refused to accept them, on the ground that he had no reason for believing them unsatisfactory.<sup>2</sup>

On Mr. Haultain's motion, the next step of the Assembly was to refuse to vote supplies for 1889-90, until the funds voted in the previous year had been accounted for. The Lieutenant-Governor was requested to accept the Advisory Council's resignation, and to choose successors in whom the House had confidence.<sup>3</sup> It was however, not content when His Honour complied, for it was determined to carry its complaints to Ottawa. A Memorandum was laid before the Minister of the Interior, with the request that he would bring it to the notice of the Privy Council. This document acknowledged the legality of the Lieutenant-Governor's position, for instead of claiming full responsible government under the Act of 1888, the Assembly merely asked that this form of government should now be established in the Territories, by handing over to the Territorial Legislature full provincial powers as set forth in the British North America Act of 1867, except that of raising money on public credit. The Memorandum also pointed out that the existing constitution did not provide any permanent responsible body to prepare legislation for the Assembly, and that the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 1104.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 1104-5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 1106-7.

legislative efficiency of that body had thus been vitiated. Their recent experience of an Advisory Council in which they had no confidence, and their protracted dispute with the Lieutenant-Governor, had convinced them that the present constitution was unworkable, and they therefore prayed that the Dominion Parliament would amend it forthwith. The Assembly further demanded that the Federal Grant should be appropriated by it, that the members of the Advisory Council should be paid and that the Lieutenant-Governor should cease to be a member.<sup>1</sup>

It is plain that the Ottawa Government did not agree with the point of view of the Assembly, and that the Act of 1888 had never been intended to grant full responsibility to the North-West. That measure had merely transferred certain legislative powers to the Territorial Legislature, but had retained the executive position of the Lieutenant-Governor practically unaltered. Sir John Thompson, speaking on this subject as it appeared to him and probably to most constitutional lawyers at Ottawa, stated: "We have never yet conferred executive powers on anybody there, although we have an Advisory Council possessing a shadow of executive authority there".<sup>2</sup> He went on to say that the Government of Canada was the executive for the North-West Territories, and that therefore executive powers should be exercised under the direction of that authority through the Lieutenant-Governor. Further, as it was the Parliament of Canada which made laws for the Territories, except in so far as it had delegated the power of passing ordinances on certain subjects to the Territorial Legislature, it should have control of executive matters in the North-West Territories, whatever the members of the Legislative Assembly might say to the contrary.

The Privy Council on January 6, 1890, disallowed an

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* vol. ii. pp. 1113-22.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1891, p. 3926.

ordinance passed by the Territorial Legislature on the 22nd of the previous November. The reasons which Sir John Thompson urged in favour of this action bring out clearly the divergence between the Assembly's claims and its legal right. "The Ordinance requires the Advisory Council to be appointed by the Assembly; the Statute vests the appointment in the Lieutenant-Governor. The Ordinance requires the Council to consist of two members; the Statute requires four. The Ordinance requires the consent of both members of the Council to every act of the Lieutenant-Governor; the Statute implies that the Lieutenant-Governor may act on the advice of a majority because it gives him a vote in the Council and the casting vote also in the case of a tie. The tenure of office prescribed by the Ordinance is the pleasure of the Assembly, while that prescribed by the Statute is the pleasure of the Lieutenant-Governor."<sup>1</sup>

After he had accepted the resignation of his second Advisory Council, Governor Royal throughout the remainder of the session of 1889, failed to induce any other group of members in the Assembly to take its place. During the recess however, he prevailed upon three members to take office, and when the Assembly met in 1890, the struggle was renewed with even greater heat than before. In its reply to the Lieutenant-Governor's opening speech, the Assembly complained that His Honour had not informed it why he had appointed an Advisory Council lacking the confidence of the House. The Assembly believed that a more exact definition of the control enjoyed by the Legislature over the executive was essential, if indeed such control existed. In the absence of any guidance from the Lieutenant-Governor on this subject, the Assembly could only assume that by the terms of its constitution as well as by established Parlia-

<sup>1</sup> Oliver, E. H., *The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records*, vol. ii. pp. 1126-7.

mentary usage, it had the full rights of a legislative body under a responsible government. It was therefore constrained to protest in the most emphatic manner, against the assumption of executive control by a group of irresponsible individuals, and it was determined to take such measures to protect itself as it might deem necessary. The unwarranted action of these members in consenting to form an Advisory Council under such conditions rendered them unfit to take part in the business of the House, and in order to vindicate its rights, the Assembly would refuse any motions or legislation proposed by those members, and so long as they retained their present position they would be debarred from sitting upon any of its committees.<sup>1</sup>

The Lieutenant-Governor replied that, in the opinion of the Minister of Justice, the highest legal authority on the subject, he had acted throughout in accordance with the law. He had no other alternative than to select an Advisory Council that was prepared to work under the existing constitution, as the Queen's Government had to be carried on. The Assembly scouted the opinion of the Minister of Justice, and reiterated its claim to full responsible government. It was responsible to the people of the North-West Territories for the interpretation of the law, and an expression of opinion, even by a Minister of Justice, could not alter its position. That could only be done by an authoritative instruction from a superior governing body. While the Assembly could understand that the Lieutenant-Governor might act upon instructions from Ottawa, or by and with the advice of his Advisory Council, they could not believe that he was empowered to govern with advisers responsible to himself alone.<sup>2</sup> This elaborate and rather exaggerated

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 1127.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1890, pp. 111-23, and Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, pp. 403-4.



statement of the Assembly was never sent to the Lieutenant-Governor, as no one had been deputed to deliver it. Perhaps another reason for its non-delivery was the fact that the Assembly knew that it was advancing claims which were untenable. It is significant that in dealing with the Lieutenant-Governor it tended to be more specific in its claims to responsible government, than it was in its memorials to Ottawa. Apparently it realised that, while it might hoodwink an official who had already shown himself none too clear about his constitutional position, it could not induce the Parliament of Canada to accept an interpretation of one of its statutes at variance both with the letter of the law and the intention of those who had passed it. At the same time, the Assembly was justified in protesting against a constitution which gave it the semblance of legislative power, and denied it the financial control necessary to put its legislation into effect. In a subsequent memorial which it desired should be sent to the Governor-General-in-Council, the Assembly contented itself with the observation that the Canadian Parliament had not taken action on its representations of the previous year.

Messrs. Betts and Brett proceeded in May 1891 to Ottawa to procure if possible, the recognition of full responsible government, as well as the right of the Assembly to appropriate all Territorial revenues, including the annual grant made from the Dominion Treasury. When they reached the capital this tempest in a teacup reached the nadir of bathos, for all the Territorial members of the House of Commons and the Territorial Senators, with one voice, denounced responsible government as premature and too expensive a luxury. They urged that no step in this direction should be taken before the Territories were divided into provinces. Messrs. Betts and Brett therefore, returned empty-handed to Regina to face their hostile colleagues.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Black, *History of Saskatchewan*, pp. 403-4.

But by this time the constitutional struggle in the North-West had attracted the attention of the Opposition in Parliament. To the suggestion of the Liberals that full responsible government should be granted forthwith, Sir John A. Macdonald stated in 1890 that whether the time had or had not come for such a step to be taken, he was unable to say, but he was in a position to say that almost every person from the Territories with whom he had spoken, was against such a development.<sup>1</sup> It was clear however, that the existing situation could not be continued, and so in 1891 an Act was passed which empowered the Legislative Assembly to make Ordinances relating to "the expenditure of Territorial funds and such portion of any moneys appropriated by Parliament for the Territories as the Lieutenant-Governor is authorised to expend by and with the advice of the Legislative Assembly or of any committee thereof".<sup>2</sup> This Act also empowered the Lieutenant-Governor to dissolve the Assembly at his discretion and cause a new one to be elected. With the abolition of the legal experts, the Assembly became a purely elective body, at whose meetings the Lieutenant-Governor was not to be present.

The first subject taken up by the second Assembly, which met in December 1891, was the form of executive which it deemed desirable. It passed an Ordinance in which it once more laid claim to full executive control through the Advisory Council. This Ordinance was submitted to the Minister of Justice, who pointed out that the law merely permitted the Advisory Council to tender advice to the Lieutenant-Governor on financial questions, and that it had no right to advise on questions of general policy.<sup>3</sup> After this the Assembly adopted the plan of choosing four of its own

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1890, p. 4462.

<sup>2</sup> 54-55 Vic. cap. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Journals of the N.W. Legislative Assembly*, 1892, Appendix, pp. 6-10, and Oliver, *op. cit.* vol. ii. pp. 1150-3.

members to advise the Lieutenant-Governor, a system which, speaking in retrospect at a later date, Sir Wilfrid Laurier criticised as not being in the spirit of British constitutional practice.<sup>1</sup> This arrangement however, did not prove satisfactory, and in 1896 the Assembly memorialised the Federal Government, stating that, in its opinion, the time had come when an Executive Council should be substituted for the present Executive Committee.<sup>2</sup> In the following year this request was acceded to, and the Executive Committee selected by the Assembly was replaced by an Executive Council chosen by the Lieutenant-Governor and enjoying the support of the majority of the Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

It has already been seen that in 1891, part of the Dominion grant was handed over to the administration of the Assembly, and in the following year it was agreed that Parliament should vote a lump sum annually for the use of the Territories, which the Assembly could appropriate as it wished. Sir John Thompson said in 1893, that it was the intention of the Federal Government to vote the Territorial grant in such a manner that the Executive Committee would be practically a responsible Cabinet, so far as that money was concerned.<sup>4</sup> By 1897 therefore, the battle for responsible government had been won, though as will be seen later, the question of the Dominion grant had not yet been placed on a wholly satisfactory footing. Already however, certain of the Territorial leaders were already looking forward to the still more distant goal of provincial status.

At the time of the acquisition of the Hudson's Bay Territories, it was assumed that at some future date that region would be carved up into provinces. This subject was

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1905, vol. i. p. 1424.

<sup>2</sup> *Journals of the North-West Legislative Assembly*, 1896, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> 60-61 Vic. cap. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1893, p. 1733.

repeatedly mentioned during the 'eighties, both at Regina and at Ottawa, and on several occasions reforms proposed by the North-West Council were postponed because of the supposed imminence of the change. During the 'nineties the demand grew more widespread, though as late as 1896 the Assembly, in its memorial just mentioned, deprecated so radical a step as the granting of full provincial rights. It held that the reforms which it sought could be attained by a few minor amendments in the North-West Territories Act.

In spite of this, a feeling had undoubtedly been developing among the people of the Territories during the last few years, that the time was rapidly approaching when provincial autonomy could no longer be delayed. Speaking in the House of Commons in 1897, the Minister of the Interior stated that for several years past, there had been in the Territories an agitation in favour of what "they call provincial autonomy".<sup>1</sup> He did not think the question was sufficiently serious to warrant consideration at the moment, but he believed the time was not far distant when Parliament would be called upon to deliberate upon this subject. Generally speaking, down to the close of the century, the people of the Territories seem to have been more interested in the amount of the Dominion grant and the manner in which it was voted, than in autonomy. In 1896 the Assembly asked, as it had so often done before, that instead of an indefinite sum each year, Parliament should agree to a fixed grant in the nature of a subsidy, the amount of which should be revised every four years.<sup>2</sup>

The subject of provincial status was brought into the sphere of practical politics by Mr. Haultain in 1899. The North-West Assembly in the following year, sent a memorial

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, 1897, p. 4116.

<sup>2</sup> *Journals of the North-West Legislative Assembly*, 1896, p. 73.

to the Governor-General-in-Council asking that inquiries should be instituted as to the terms upon which the Territories, or any part of them, might be granted provincial status.<sup>1</sup> This led to a conference between the Minister of the Interior and Mr. Haultain, the result of which was that the Minister informed Parliament that provincial autonomy could no longer be delayed, as the people of the North-West were determined to have it, and that they were as capable of governing themselves as any people in Canada.<sup>2</sup>

In 1901, Mr. Haultain the Premier of the North-West Territories, submitted a statement of the Territorial position to a joint conference, representing the Privy Council and the North-West Legislature, and he also laid before this body a draft bill for the establishment of a province.<sup>3</sup> This measure provided that the administration of Crown Lands should be transferred to the new province, and that all royalties accruing from mines, timber or other sources, should go into the provincial treasury. Even at this late date however, representative people were still to be found in the Territories, who preferred the existing constitutional arrangement to full provincial status. Their chief opposition to the change appears to have been the price which the people would have to pay for what, according to them, was a mere luxury. They held that the Territories already enjoyed most of the advantages and few of the limitations of provinces. They had responsible government and were to all intents and purposes on a footing of equality with them. These people considered that the settlement of the Dominion subsidy was of much greater importance. "We should either have an increased subsidy or provincial autonomy. As far as I have given the matter attention, I think it would be much better for the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1900, p. 72, and Oliver, *op. cit.* vol. ii. pp. 1155-7.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1901, vol. i. pp. 1368-9.

<sup>3</sup> Oliver, *op. cit.* vol. ii. pp. 1163 ff.

country in its existing circumstances to receive an increased subsidy rather than provincial autonomy."<sup>1</sup>

It is unnecessary here to traverse the dreary desert of proposals and counter-proposals, telegrams, letters, memorials and speeches relating to this subject between 1901 and 1905. The only relief vouchsafed to the weary traveller through this arid waste is afforded by occasional cases of sprightly rejoinder to Government suggestions on the part of Mr. Haultain, who conducted the Territorial attack with great skill and resource. Once the battle was joined, it became clear that there were divisions within the Territorial forces, and that Mr. Haultain could not claim to speak for everyone in the North-West. Some wanted one province, some wanted two, some wished to confine the political agitation to the question of the Dominion subsidy, while others were anxious that the whole question of provincial autonomy should be dropped for a few years.<sup>2</sup> The Canadian Government, whose policy was to hasten slowly, naturally tended to take advantage of these divisions, and so to confute that wary tactician Mr. Haultain.

Still, the people of the Territories were not deeply moved by the battle of the politicians, for in reality no vital issue was involved. Everyone knew that sooner or later the North-West would be carved into provinces, and the question of their number, their boundaries and the precise moment at which the change was to take place, were merely matters of detail. This however, does not imply any depreciation of the magnificent work of Mr. Haultain. Indeed, it was fortunate for both the North-West and Canada that for upwards of fifteen years the destiny of the Territories was guided by his skilful hand. Sir Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, who knew the prairie country better than most western politicians,

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1902, vol. ii, p. 3074.

<sup>2</sup> *Journals of the North-West Legislative Assembly*, 1902, pp. 18-26.

stated in the Canadian House of Commons that he did not believe a grievance really existed,<sup>1</sup> and that the settlement of the financial and constitutional status of so vast a region was sufficiently important to justify protracted and careful consideration.

In a letter to Mr. Haultain in 1903, Sir Wilfrid Laurier wrote that he did not consider it advisable to raise the question of provincial status. He urged that this subject should be left over until the redistribution of seats, which would give the Territories ten instead of six representatives at Ottawa, had been completed.<sup>2</sup> To this the Territorial Premier replied, that while the question of representation at Ottawa was important, that of provincial autonomy was infinitely more so. "The obtaining of provincial powers is in our opinion of much greater importance to the people of the Territories, than additional representation in a Parliament whose failure to fulfil the duties and obligations it has assumed with regard to the North-West is one of our strongest reasons for demanding Home Rule."<sup>3</sup> At long last, on February 21, 1905, Sir Wilfrid Laurier introduced the Bill which was to provide for the new province of Alberta. "The time has arrived", he said, "when . . . another step, and the last, can now be taken to complete the passage of the North-West Territories from what was once the necessary tutelage into the fulness of the rights which, under our constitution, appertain to provinces."<sup>4</sup> The North-West Territories Act of 1875, which had never been repealed, "has remained to this day the rock upon which has been reared the structure which we are about to crown with complete and actual autonomy".<sup>5</sup> He then traced the constitutional development of the Territories since 1875, and pointed out that for years they had

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1902, vol. ii. p. 3101.

<sup>2</sup> *Journals of the North-West Legislative Assembly*, 1903, p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1903, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Hansard, 1905, vol. i. p. 1422. <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1905, vol. i. p. 1423.

enjoyed a substantial measure of local autonomy. "The metal has been in the crucible, and all we have to do now is to place the stamp of Canadian nationality upon it."<sup>1</sup>

As he anticipated, Parliament was mainly interested in four chief subjects, the number of provinces to be created, the ownership of public lands, the financial terms to be granted to the new province and the kind of school system that it was to be empowered to establish. As to the first of these, it was not difficult to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. Excluding the barren waste lands of the far north, which could not reasonably be included, there remained a vast region of about five hundred and fifty thousand square miles. Assuming that the provinces to be created should be approximately equal in area, he proposed to create two, to be known as Alberta and Saskatchewan. There was some slight objection in Parliament to these names. One member advocated the retention of the term Assiniboia for Saskatchewan, while another made the more imaginative suggestion that the new provinces should be called Cartier and Champlain instead of Alberta and Saskatchewan. As far as boundaries were concerned, the champions of Greater Manitoba advocated the western extension of that province to include Assiniboia, and they generously agreed that what was left over might be set up as one province. A few carping critics attacked the exclusion of the northern districts, while one member urged that the eastern boundary of the new province of Alberta, from the South Saskatchewan south to the 49th parallel, should be moved eastward so as to include the whole of the ranching district, on the ground that it was an economic unit. On the whole however, the House acquiesced, both as to the number and the boundaries of the new provinces.

As was expected, the ownership of public lands gave rise

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1905, vol. i. p. 1425.



to a more serious division of opinion. The reasons urged by the Government in favour of federal control were too thin to carry conviction, either then or since. It was contended that as the Dominion must remain primarily responsible for immigration, it was right and proper that it should control the administration of the lands it was seeking to populate. Further, if these lands were transferred to the new provinces, they might be sold or disposed of in an unwise and wasteful manner, a very feeble argument in view of the lavish way in which the Federal Government had doled out Western lands to various great corporations. The opponents of this part of the Bill claimed that Alberta and Saskatchewan should be given the same rights as those which were conferred by the British North America Act upon provinces, and this included the control of public lands. The fact that an injustice had been done to Manitoba in the past, did not justify its repetition in the case of the two new provinces now to be created, and one member went so far as to say that the Bill was designed to set up second-grade provinces, inferior in status to the original members of the Confederation.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the support given to this section by several Western members, weakened the attack of the Opposition. Mr. Oliver for example, defended the retention of control over Crown Lands by the Dominion, because "the interest of the province in these lands is the revenue it can get from their sale, while the interest of the Dominion is the revenue it can derive from the settler who makes it productive". But why the provinces should not interest themselves in immigration and in making the land productive, Mr. Oliver did not show. So the Government had its way in the end, and thus laid up for the people of Canada stores of future trouble, for sooner or later, the people of the West would resent this curtailment of their rights.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 1905, vol. iv. p. 6017.

While the people of the two new provinces could justly complain against the treatment they received in the matter of Crown Lands, they had no reason to object to the Government's financial proposals. The Bill provided for an annual grant of fifty thousand dollars to support the Government and Legislature of the province, and two hundred thousand dollars on an estimated population of two hundred and fifty thousand, paid at the rate of eighty cents per capita, which was to be increased every five years in proportion to the growth of the population, until it should reach eight hundred thousand. The Federal Government also agreed to pay interest at the rate of five per cent on the eight million one hundred and seven thousand five hundred dollars, the estimated value of Alberta's share of the Territorial debt and public works already completed which the Dominion was to assume. While taking over the control of Crown Lands, the Bill provided for compensations to the new province of three hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, or one per cent on the assumed value of the twenty-five million acres of Crown Lands which the Dominion rated at one dollar, fifty cents an acre. It was further proposed that when the population of the province was between four hundred thousand and eight hundred thousand, the interest on Crown Lands should be paid at one and a half per cent per annum, or five hundred and sixty-two thousand dollars. When the population was between eight hundred thousand and one million two hundred thousand, it would be paid at two per cent, or seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and after that, interest would be paid at the rate of three per cent, or one million one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. As a special grant, the Bill contained a provision for the payment, during a period of five years, of a sum amounting to one quarter of one per cent of the assumed value, or ninety-three thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars.

The highest flights of Parliamentary eloquence however, were reserved for the Government's proposals on the subject of education. Here at last was the opportunity for which members had been waiting, particularly members from the East, who gave free rein to their dialectical powers. As this subject is dealt with in another chapter, it is sufficient to observe here that, as a whole, the members from the West took little interest in it, or when they did, it was to urge that this subject be left alone. At length the Bill passed, though not without scars, through its various stages, and became law on July 20, 1905.<sup>1</sup> Thus Alberta became a province and her pioneer phase was over.

<sup>1</sup> The Alberta Act, 5 Ed. VII. cap. 33.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### PIONEER DAYS

FOR several years after its establishment, Fort Macleod was the most important place in the South. It was on the trail between Benton and Edmonton, for some time the headquarters of the Mounted Police and until the close of the 'seventies, the centre of a brisk trade in buffalo skins. When Lieutenant-Governor Laird visited the place in 1877, its inhabitants presented him with an address of welcome, and he was surprised to find so thriving a village in so distant a corner of the Territories, its shops well stocked with goods and signs of prosperity to be seen on all sides.

Macleod's ascendancy was however, short-lived. The close of the 'seventies witnessed the disappearance of the buffalo. In 1883 the old town site became untenable, owing to a change in the course of the Old Man's River, so that a new fort had to be built. A site was chosen about two and a half miles west of the old post, on the bench land overlooking the Old Man's River and on the south side of it. The buildings of the new fort were laid out in a rectangle four hundred and eighty-four feet long, and two hundred and fifty-four feet wide, and as the North-Western Coal and Navigation Company, which carried out the construction, had by then established its sawmill in the Porcupine Hills, lumber was used throughout, which ensured greater comfort for the men.<sup>1</sup> The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway destroyed

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Commissioner, N.W.M.P.*, 1883, pp. 24-5

Macleod's position as the chief distributing centre of the South, since supplies which formerly had been sent to Southern Alberta by way of Benton and Macleod, were now brought into the Territories by rail. The fortunes of the town however, improved when the completion of the Calgary-Macleod line brought it into direct railway communication with the outside world, while the construction of the Crow's Nest line made it an important railway junction. Throughout the period Macleod was famous as a ranching centre.

Calgary during the first years of its history showed little signs of growth. As soon as the Police arrived in 1875, Father Constantine Scollen established a mission near by, while the Methodists, under the energetic direction of John McDougall, built a church for themselves. I. G. Baker & Company opened a store, and the Hudson's Bay Company moved down from Ghost River. At first trade with the Indians was fairly steady, but until the coming of the railway Calgary showed little signs of its future greatness. It was merely a Mounted Police post and a stopping place between Macleod and Edmonton. When Steel revisited the place in 1883, after a five years' absence, he saw little indication of improvement. "Calgary at this time was a cluster of portable huts and frame-houses, on the east side of the Elbow River", and where the centre of the town now is, there was as yet no settlement. There were two churches, two hotels, and a few shops all in tents, together with some freighters' shacks and the Mounted Police barracks.

The arrival of the railway turned Calgary from an isolated post into a thriving frontier town, which quickly outdistanced all others in the Territories. Speaking in London in 1884, Alexander Begg said: "In my opinion this place, owing to the vicinity of the great cattle ranches to the south and the fine agricultural land surrounding it, is destined to be one of

the most important cities in the North-West. . . . Altogether I am inclined to place great faith in the future of Calgary".<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Pacific Railway Company surveyed a new town site west of the Elbow River, and in 1884 the sale of lots began. Those who had established themselves east of that river moved over, and before the close of the year the new town was already assuming an air of permanence. Visitors who passed over the new railway were all impressed by its beautiful setting and its great economic possibilities. "Calgary is considered the Queen City of the Far West and is by far the most prosperous and lively place in the Territories. It stands, or reposes, in a basin, which is walled in by precipitous banks, and appears to be surrounded by a couple of foaming, rushing, tumbling torrents of purest glacier water, namely the Bow and Elbow Rivers which here unite. A decade has not passed since the buffalo grazed in the valley and now there are stone buildings, theatre, rink, town-hall, churches and banks and many costly and comfortable residences."<sup>2</sup> The same writer says of Southern Alberta: "There is not the least doubt that the district of Alberta" (which meant for him Southern Alberta) "is the garden of the North-West. It is peerless among the cattle countries of the world. I can unhesitatingly advise anyone to go there. The class of settlers, too, is immensely superior to that in Assiniboia and Saskatchewan. This region was familiarly known as 'God's country' among us."<sup>3</sup> Just before the close of the pioneer period this flattering estimate of Southern Alberta and its people, was supported by no less an authority than Lord Minto, who, on a visit to the West, was very much taken with this region. "The members of my staff laugh at me because I say that if I began life over again I would

<sup>1</sup> "Seventeen Years in the Canadian North-West." A paper read at the Royal Colonial Institute on April 8, 1884. (London, 1884.)

<sup>2</sup> Donkin, J. G., *Trooper and Redskin in the Far West*, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 199.

choose the Bow River country for a home."<sup>1</sup> Calgary grew very slowly during the 'eighties and 'nineties, but its growth was solid, and by 1906 it had a population of eleven thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven.

The town site of Lethbridge was staked out in 1885, and named after Mr. William Lethbridge, the first President of the North-Western Coal and Navigation Company. The town was well planned, with broad streets a hundred feet wide, and was provided with a ten-acre open space in the centre, where bull-teams would be able to turn. When that picturesque and noisy method of transport had disappeared, the turning-ground was used as a sports field and was finally laid out as a public park. Although miners were at work before the end of 1885, it was not until 1887 that the Police quarters were completed, and Steele was able to move in with his men. By that time Lethbridge was already a busy colliery town of some two thousand inhabitants, and train-loads of coal were sent out daily. Like coal-mining towns the world over, the fortunes of Lethbridge experienced violent fluctuations. In the 'nineties for example, when the markets for its staple production began to fail, it went through some very difficult years, and it was the first town in the Territories to feel the effects of industrial conflict. In still another way Lethbridge became a sign and a warning for other parts of the North-West, as it illustrated what might be expected from an unrestricted system of immigration. Captain Deane states that it was necessary to publish all public notices in some half-dozen different languages, in order to be sure that they would be understood by all, and his annual reports bear ample testimony to the danger of gathering together in one community, representatives of so many different nationalities. As the ranching industry developed in its section of the country, Lethbridge became an important distributing and

<sup>1</sup> Buchan, J., *Lord Minto: A Memoir*, p. 193. (London, 1924.)

shipping centre, and was thus less affected by fluctuations in the coal trade. Its population remained fairly constant throughout the period, and by 1905 it had two thousand three hundred and thirteen inhabitants.

Medicine Hat is the translation of the Indian word "Saamis", the Blackfoot name for the head-dress of a medicine man. The reason for applying the term to this particular place seems to be a matter of doubt, as several explanations have been given. Of these, the most probable is that the name was originally applied to a hill situated to the east of the town, which resembled a medicine man's hat, and that it was given to the town which came into existence on the appearance of the railway. It has also been associated with a battle between the Blackfeet and the Crees, with the slaughter of a party of white settlers, and with the rescue of a young squaw from the South Saskatchewan by a Blackfoot brave. Whatever the meaning of the name itself, there is no doubt about the origin of the town, for it was the coming of the railway which first called it into existence, and, like many others of its kind, it seems almost to have sprung up overnight. When Principal Dawson was there in 1883, he was impressed with the developments which had already taken place, for he states that the town then contained two photographers, three or four billiard-rooms and large shops where everything required by a frontier community was to be had.<sup>1</sup>

With the eastward extension of the ranching district, Medicine Hat before the end of the pioneer period, became an important "cow town". This, coupled with the discovery of coal in its neighbourhood almost as soon as it was founded, and still more, the fact that great stores of natural gas lay beneath it, justified its title the "town that was born lucky". Like the other towns of the Territories, the growth of Medicine Hat during the early days was slow, but by 1905

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings Royal Colonial Institute*, vol. xv., 1883-84, p. 211.



with its three thousand and twenty inhabitants it ranked as the third in size in the new Province of Alberta.


Shortly after the establishment of these towns, the Press made its appearance, and a very vigorous Press it was, as might be expected in a country of mounted policemen and cowboys. The first paper published in the south was the *Macleod Gazette*, which began to appear in September 1882 under the direction of two ex-mounted policemen, Messrs. E. T. Saunders and C. E. D. Wood. It was a four-page paper, each page of which contained four columns. A copy dated April 24, 1883, which is still extant, devoted seven of its sixteen columns to local and general news, while the fact that the journal contained advertisements from places as widely scattered as Benton, Walsh and Calgary, testified to the importance of Macleod as a distributing centre at that time. The Benton, Fort Macleod and Calgary Mail, Passenger and Express Line announced its time-table in the advertisement columns, for the departures of its four-horse coaches north and south. The South-Western Stock Association offered substantial rewards for anyone who assisted in the identification of those responsible for maliciously starting prairie-fires, as well as for the apprehension of horse and cattle thieves. The editorial of this date referred to the subject of education: "A large number of children are running wild with no opportunity of receiving even the first rudiments of ordinary education. . . . If Pincher Creek and Macleod with the surrounding country unite, a first-class school could be started." In 1884, the *Gazette* was enlarged to a four-column six-page paper, and a new press, which was brought up the Missouri and overland to Macleod, was installed. Before the new engine was set up, the motive power was supplied by a number of Indian braves. When everything was ready for a new edition, the Indians stripped to a loin-cloth, entered the press room and sat down in stolid silence

in a row, with their backs to the wall. Each warrior in turn rose, gave the handle of the machine a few turns and retired to his place on the floor while his neighbour repeated the process, and it is said that it took at least a dozen braves to complete the job.

On August 1, 1883, T. B. Braden and A. M. Armour, with a future Canadian Prime Minister, the Hon. (afterwards Sir) Mackenzie Bowell, as printer's devil, produced the first number of the *Calgary Weekly Herald, Mining and Ranch Advocate*, a four-page paper whose sheets were less than foolscap size. The first numbers were printed in a cramped tent on the banks of the Elbow River, but such mundane considerations as limited accommodation and uncertain financial support did not diminish the lofty intentions of the editor. In his first editorial he wrote: "The duty, then, and pleasure of the *Herald* will be, categorically this: The collection of all news items of local interest. The encouragement and support of all legitimate and manufacturing enterprises. The encouragement of all measures, religious and moral, intended for the welfare of the community. The exposure of all species of vice and immorality that come to our knowledge. The exposure of any measure or acts on the part of individuals, corporations or governments, which appear to be framed against the true interests of the place, people or district. Thoroughly independent in the matter of politics, always ready to give credit to one and all, irrespective of creed, colour, race or politics, whose efforts may be worthy of recognition, but under no circumstances neutral. Having always the courage of its convictions, the *Herald* will not be afraid to speak out its mind freely when there are wrongs to be redressed, or manifest abuses to be reprimanded."<sup>1</sup>

Among the activities which the high-minded editor of the *Herald* believed to be detrimental to public morals and the

<sup>1</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, Fortieth Anniversary Number.



common good, was the existence of a rival journal. The *Nor' Wester* was started in 1884, and the *Herald* at once engaged it in a most unedifying contest, considering the virtuous flourish of trumpets with which it had made its debut: "Let us whisper a word in your ear, Mr. Nor' Wester. We conduct our business on business principles. We pay our hands every Saturday night. We do not get credit from the stores and then compel the proprietors to take their pay in printing. We do not make the boast the Government will see us through and that the people of Calgary can go to —!" The smug, self-satisfied attitude adopted by the *Herald* during the early years must have proved very distressing to others besides the editor of the *Nor' Wester*. It is a matter of regret that the files of that journal have disappeared, for it would be interesting to read the editorial which induced the virtuous editor of such a paragon of journalistic excellence as the *Herald* proclaimed itself, to write: "We have never seen equalled among all our exchanges, good, bad or indifferent, the bombast, egotism and literary bravado characteristic of that paper. From the first appearance of that sheet, there have pervaded its columns the emanations of a newspaper pugilist. . . . Henceforth it is our intention to allow the wailing and whining of the *Nor' Wester* to die upon the air. . . . Such a paper will not lessen our circulation. We have no time for scanning the dictionary of spiteful epithets. . . . A nobler mission and a grander ideal is ours. . . . Adieu! *Nor' Wester*, adieu!"

The *Medicine Hat Times* first began to appear in 1884, with Mr. Armour, who had by that time terminated his connection with the *Calgary Herald*, as its first editor. This pioneer journalist never seems to have been discouraged by small beginnings. It has already been seen that the first number of the *Calgary Herald* was produced in a tent. The first number of the *Medicine Hat Times*, a two-sheet weekly,

fifteen inches by ten in size, was sent out from a disused box car, which served the editor both as newspaper office and residence. The *Lethbridge News* was first published in 1885, under the editorship of Mr. E. T. Saunders, and compared with its contemporaries, its history was uneventful.

The task of the editor in the early days was not easy, for the public which he served demanded clear, hard-hitting editorials, which, unless he was careful, might land him in gaol. Indeed, this fate actually befell at least two Territorial editors, one of whom, Mr. Cayley, was destined to play a noted part in Territorial politics, and in his later life to adorn the Bench. When not conducting a furious campaign against a rival publication, or indulging in a long-distance bombardment of Regina or Ottawa, the editor was mildly expostulating with subscribers who did not subscribe, and reminding them that he had to conduct his business on a cash basis. In 1887, the *Calgary Herald* was taken over by a new proprietor, and it is significant that he announced that henceforward the paper would be conducted as a business concern, and not as a charitable institution. These journals frequently changed hands, and apparently there were many potential editors in the country. On one occasion, for example, the proprietor and editor of the *Medicine Hat Times* got tired of his work, so he induced a man who was obviously without a penny in the world to take it over. It was typical of the West in those days, that this apparent tramp turned out to be an able journalist and business man.

Before the close of the period, Southern Alberta was served by several papers, of which these were the pioneers. During the 'eighties and 'nineties they did not devote all their time to vitriolic attacks upon each other, but did much to mobilise public opinion, a very difficult task in a pioneering community. Whatever a more critical generation may think of them, these early journals were not despised by the

people whom they served. Often for weeks and months at a time, the local paper which had to be brought from a distance of over a hundred miles or more along some lonely trail was the only link the isolated settlers had with the outside world. In the unending round of ranch or farm work, the arrival of a newspaper was an important event, no matter how small its size and how parochial its outlook.

Pioneering in Southern Alberta was probably not so hard as it had been in old Ontario, where the settler had literally to hew his farm out of the living forest. A long journey through the woods on foot was frequently necessary when supplies were required, and many an Ontario pioneer carried his flour on his back for fifty miles over a forest trail. Often the lonely immigrant was obliged to paddle for days down a deserted river or along the shore of a gigantic lake, to reach the settlements. In Alberta, on the other hand, there was no difficulty about transport, for, except when the rivers were in flood, the whole prairie was an open road. Still, the Alberta pioneers had their own full share of privation and hardship. Surely few things can be more overpowering for a stranger than the immensity of the prairie, when for miles in all directions there is nothing to be seen but an unending succession of lonely hills or a flat expanse of plain. The settler's loneliness is increased by the fact that he can see, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he is absolutely alone, a certainty which the backwoodsman, surrounded by the forest, never has. The little shack that has been built with such labour, sinks into utter insignificance in that vast ocean of emptiness, and its builder realises his puniness as he has never realised it before. It was bad enough in the summer, when there was work to do and when the prairie was astir with life, but in the winter it often became almost unendurable. The new settlers had to learn the ways of the prairie. They had to accustom themselves to the

blazing heat of its summer days, the extreme cold of the winter, the sudden variations in temperature and the deadly fury of the blizzard.

It was on the women, however, that pioneer life laid its heaviest hand and left its most abiding mark. The men, forced to live in the open, to ride, to herd cattle and meeting constantly with their neighbours, generally found the life pleasant, even though the crops failed or steers did not fetch a good price. But for the women it was often otherwise. The majority of them were obliged to spend their lives in a ceaseless round of laborious duties, within the walls of a tiny shack, and the struggle to maintain a semblance of civilised existence became almost insupportable. There they spent their lives, there they bore and nurtured their children, often with no skilled medical adviser within fifty or a hundred miles. At round-up or harvest time, or when the men-folk were driving the cattle to the nearest shipping station, they were left alone for days at a time. With stories of Frog Lake and Fish Creek massacres fresh in their minds, there was nothing to keep them company but the dreary moaning of the prairie wind in the dry grasses and about the buildings, or, in the still, cold nights, the lugubrious yelp of coyotes to add the last touch to their loneliness and desolation.

Doctors were scarce even in the towns, and in the country many a district had to subsist as best it could without them, so that the struggle against disease had to be carried on by the settlers themselves, aided perhaps by some medical manual of the simplest kind. Women were frequently the doctors for their own families, and usually there was one in a district with sufficient skill to assist at the birth of the pioneers' children. One lady, Mrs. Finnigan of Gleichen, who acted as community doctor in that district, helped to bring thirty babies into the world. For those who were so unwise as to develop a toothache, there was nothing for it

but the crudest methods, unless the district was fortunate enough to have such ladies as Mrs. Lynch-Staunton of Pincher Creek and Mrs. Finnigan of Gleichen, both of whom wielded the forceps in a thoroughly professional manner.

Hundreds of instances of their hardships could be given, but one must suffice. In the middle of winter a woman realised that her three children were suffering from diphtheria. Her husband was away and would not be back for several days. There was no one within several miles and, of course, it was before the time of the telephone. She could not leave her children alone, and she dare not take them with her to her nearest neighbour, lest they should spread the disease. There was therefore nothing for it but hitch-up the horse, put him into the cutter, wrap the children in buffalo robes, and with the short winter day drawing to its close and the blizzard beginning to rise, start for the town, some twenty-five miles away. There was just a chance that she might thus be able to save her children's lives, for she knew that by remaining at home she would be certain to lose them.

Pioneering, however, was not all hardship and privation. Many families were reared in perfect health, and there was much to break the monotony of the life. Old Timers still recall the joyous dances of the old days, when the settlers for miles about gathered in some school or farmhouse to dance the night away, and only went home in time to do the "chores". The negro had not yet become the dancing-master of the world, and in the West the square dance was universal. Many consider that there was as much pleasure, and more art, in the quadrilles and schottisches as in the foxtrots and charlestons of the modern age, with their complete surrender of everything traditional and indigenous to all-pervading jazz. Hour after hour, the fiddler played the old familiar tunes, while the master of ceremonies, or "caller-off", as he was styled, always a valued member of the

community, guided the couples through the intricate mazes of the dance by his jingling' rhymes:

First two gents cross over and by the lady stand,  
Next two gents cross over and take her by the hand;  
Swing the corner lady and balance to partners all,  
Swing your own fair lady and promenade the hall.

Or again:

Ladies lead up to the right of the ring,  
And when you get there you may balance and swing;  
Then back to your place, remember the call,  
*Tout le monde* left and promenade all.

In summer time, what with horse-racing, picnics in abundance, good hunting and incessant healthy work, the majority of the settlers were usually too busy to feel lonely. Quilting bees and other such co-operative efforts which brought them together, did much to soften the asperities of the life for the women and girls. Polo was introduced in the Pincher Creek district shortly after the ranchers established themselves there. Tennis clubs appeared in various places, ice-hockey and baseball in the towns, and on the open range there was always the excitement of a round-up.

When nothing else was going forward, the latest blunder of the most recently arrived remittance-man furnished ample material for conversation. In most cases these young men were not nearly so bad, or so mad, as they tried to convince themselves and other people that they were. Some of them were degenerate weaklings, who would have been out of place in any community, and were conspicuously so in the West of that time. For the most part, however, they were high-spirited young men who, because they grew weary of the ordered existence of the old country and the rigid conventions of a highly respectable Victorian home, or because they broke some canon of middle-class propriety, were shipped off to the West. Two or three years in the ranks of



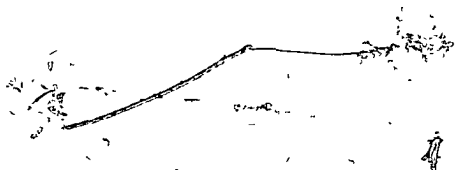
the Mounted Police turned many of them into magnificent material for a new country, and the majority of them ultimately made the best of settlers. They were raw when they came to the North-West, and as they understood they had a rôle to play (the rôle of the greenhorn who always does things backwards), they usually had enough sense of humour to play it with zest. With all their faults, they were good men to have, and it is to be regretted that more of the remittance-man type are not being sent out to-day. Western Canada could easily do without thousands of the offscourings of Eastern European peasantry, with their slave mentality and their traditions of oppression, if their places could be filled by young Englishmen of education and courage, such as the majority of the remittance-men were. The West could well afford to receive a few of the weaklings among them, knowing well that the majority had in them the blood that has made England the greatest colonising country the world has known.

In addition to the remittance-men, others came to Alberta from Great Britain and many also from Eastern Canada. They came to the country from various motives, some because they wanted to make money, some because they were tired of city life, and some—and these were the true pioneers—because they desired to be at the beginning of things. They were drawn from all classes and numbered among them members of well-known families in the East and the Old Country, representatives of the solid British middle-class and the British working man, together with a wide assortment of Canadians, including a disproportionate representation, if it is possible to have too much of a good thing, of the ubiquitous men from Bruce.<sup>1</sup> But whatever their origin, once they arrived in the West, distinctions of

<sup>1</sup> Bruce County, Ontario, populated mainly by Highland Scottish immigrants.

birth and culture were laid aside and there was among them a true feeling of oneness, developed by their isolation and the consciousness that they were all engaged in laying the foundations of a new country. For these people, the stream from Eastern Europe that began to flow into the West at the end of the 'nineties was not wholly welcome, though they knew that the country had to be filled, and for a short time after 1900, the American flood made many of them feel that the distinctively British character which they had given to Southern Alberta was in danger of being lost, but these latter soon made the best of Canadians.

In less than the lifetime of one generation, the pioneers made of a barren land, inhabited by untamed savages, a good inheritance for all who should come after them. The pioneer period was hard, but it was, for those who knew it, a heroic age. Some of the Old Timers have left a name behind them that will be remembered, but others have no memorial except the country which they helped to make. Poverty came to many, wealth to a few, but poor or rich, they showed an example of fortitude in adversity and sober faith in the future of Alberta, which their children will do well to follow.



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Clark, J.	Dennis, J. H.	Dixon, R.
La Pierre, A. J.	Larkin, E.	MacArthur, P.
MacInnes, M.	Martin, J.	Mayhood, S. H.
McDonald, A.	McKernan, J.	Rogers, A.
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